



For Immediate Release

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First Place AZ Elects Board Officers, Bruce Schwartz to Board of Directors

PHOENIX (May 6, 2021) — [First Place® AZ](#), a local and global nonprofit working to ensure that housing and community options are as bountiful for people with autism and other neurodiversities as they are for everyone else, has elected new board officers and Bruce Schwartz to its board of directors.

New officers:

- Board Chair - Howard Sobelman, Partner, Snell & Wilmer
- Vice Chair - Joyce Millard Hoie, Former Executive Director, Raising Special Kids
- Secretary - Kathy Hancock, Group Consultant, Vertex Advisors
- Treasurer - Jack Henry, Founder & Former Managing Director, Sierra Blanca Ventures, LLC

“Our diverse group of board members and officers is furthering First Place’s vision of inclusion and advanced housing options here in Greater Phoenix—and everywhere,” says Howard Sobelman, First Place board chair.

For 30 years and prior to moving to the Phoenix area, Schwartz owned, operated and significantly expanded his Philadelphia-based family business, Jerith Manufacturing Co., Inc., the oldest and largest producer of ornamental aluminum fences in the country.

“Bruce brings extensive executive skills, nonprofit leadership and real-life experience as a parent of an individual with autism,” Sobelman says.

Schwartz’s 30-year-old daughter, Emily, is on the autism spectrum and is a resident at First Place–Phoenix. He and his wife, Sheila, now live in Paradise Valley.

Schwartz formerly served on the board of directors of KenCrest, located in the Philadelphia area, for seven years. KenCrest provides community-based supports to people with developmental or intellectual disabilities and their families in Pennsylvania, Delaware and Connecticut.

“Emily is thriving and has never been happier since she moved to First Place–Phoenix,” says Schwartz. “I’m honored to be involved with an organization that is increasing inclusivity and independent living opportunities for individuals with autism and neurodiversity.”

Schwartz graduated from Northwestern University with a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering and received his MBA from the University of Michigan.

First Place–Phoenix, First Place AZ’s 81,000-square-foot, \$15.4 million 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 advance more independent and community-integrated living options. In addition to 55 apartments, First Place–Phoenix has a sports pool, culinary teaching kitchen, fitness and game rooms and other common areas for various activities.

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 nonprofit organization advancing innovative residential options for adults with autism and other special abilities, celebrates neurodiversity, independent living and the belief that housing and community options for people with autism and other special abilities should be as bountiful as they are for everyone else. First Place is creating replicable residential and post-secondary education models that promote collaboration among the public, private, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. First Place–Phoenix, the nonprofit’s first new property, opened in 2018. Leasing opportunities are available.

View PBS NewsHour’s two-part series about First Place at [“Giving Adults with Autism the Skills to Build Independent Lives”](#) and [“How Phoenix Became the Most Autism-Friendly City in the World.”](#) Read the much anticipated, groundbreaking report, [“A Place in the World: Fueling Housing and Community Options for Adults with Autism and Other Neurodiversities,”](#) developed in collaboration with ASU’s [Morrison Institute for Public Policy](#) and the [Autism Housing Network](#). Learn more at firstplaceaz.org.