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First Place AZ Appoints CFO/COO

PHOENIX (January 4, 2017) — First Place®AZ has appointed Joe Cooper as its Chief Financial and Operating Officer.

First Place AZ is a 501(c)3 non-profit working hard to ensure that housing options for people with autism and other special abilities are as bountiful as they are for everyone else.

In December 2016, First Place®AZ broke ground on First Place-Phoenix, a new \$15 million, 81,000-square-foot residential property, located at 3001 N. Third Street in Phoenix. Designed for adults with autism and different abilities, the property represents a one-of-a-kind approach to combining apartments, a residential training program and a national leadership institute to advance more independent and community integrated living options.

“Joe brings a wealth of executive management experience and expertise in business operations, finance, partnering and organizational development. His leadership will be instrumental to expanding the reach and impact of our nonprofit,” said Denise D. Resnik, First Place founder, president & CEO. “Joe also brings a long-standing commitment to serving this population as a former and founding board member of First Place AZ and former board member of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC).”

Spanning a total of 30 years in financial and business leadership roles, Cooper also served as executive vice president of NYSE-listed Medicis Pharmaceutical Corporation in Scottsdale where he was responsible for corporate development and operations. He has consulted with numerous health care and technology companies.

He will oversee the financial management and operational growth of the First Place AZ and plans for replication and licensing of its curriculum and programs.

First Place-Phoenix, the first new development by the nonprofit, features three main components:

- [First Place Apartments](#): 56 studio, one-, two- and four-bedroom units for lease by residents, supported by a suite of independent living services and amenities
- [First Place Transition Academy](#): A two-year, tuition-based residential training program for participants focused on independent living skills, career readiness and interpersonal relations
- [First Place Leadership Institute](#): A national training center for professionals, direct service support providers and medical personnel, a robust site for research and public policy advancements

“I am extremely pleased to be able to add my experience to the First Place mission and to work alongside such a talented and dedicated group of staff, board members and community advisors and supporters,” Cooper said. “We look forward to having First Place serve as a model for public and private collaboration and to provide housing options and transitional living skills for our participants and residents.”

Cooper previously served as a board member of First Place, and past board chair of SARRC’s Research and Medical Affairs Committee, helping the nonprofit with early efforts to develop a robust approach to clinical trials.

Cooper earned a master in business administration from the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. Additionally he serves as an advisor and mentor to Startup Mill at Arizona State University a program jointly run by the Office of Entrepreneurship + Innovation and Arizona Technology Enterprises (AzTE).

For more information or to become involved, email info@firstplaceaz.org or visit www.firstplaceaz.org.

About First Place AZ

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 that serve as catalysts for advancing 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 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. To learn more, visit www.firstplaceaz.org and check out these 2016 PBS NewsHour segments: [“Giving Adults with Autism the Skills to Build Independent Lives”](#) and [“How Phoenix Became the Most Autism Friendly City in the World”](#).