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**Make Waves Family Foundation Announces \$1 Million Gift  
to First Place Global Leadership Institute**

***Gift to Fund Real Estate and Community Development Initiatives***

**PHOENIX (February 7, 2023)** — The [Make Waves Family Foundation](#), a Boston-based foundation that empowers youth and adults living with Autism and other developmental disabilities, has announced a \$1 million gift to the [First Place Global Leadership Institute](#) over the next five years, creating the Make Waves Center for Community Development.

The Make Waves Center aims to fuel a new marketplace of supportive housing and community options through replicable, sustainable design, programming and development strategies. It seeks to raise the bar on the quality of life for people with Autism and other neurodiversities—and provide greater peace of mind for families, according to Denise D. Resnik, First Place AZ founder and president/CEO and mother of an adult son with Autism.

“In collaboration with local and national pioneering organizations and properties, we are leading through the ‘power of local’ here in Greater Phoenix and in various locations nationwide, as well as through essential market intelligence,” says Resnik.

In the coming year, the Make Waves Center will conduct four regional housing analyses in the U.S. to identify the housing needs and preferences of adults with Autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities (A/I/DD). The center is scheduled to release the Greater Phoenix Housing Market Analysis in February, which will inform the development of options responsive to population needs, as well as marketplace interests and priorities.

“We are proud to support the First Place Global Leadership Institute and its innovative approaches to breaking through barriers and giving more people with Autism the opportunity to thrive,” says Donna Roth, founder and director of the Make Waves Family Foundation. “Our

goal is to support people with Autism and other developmental disabilities so they can live meaningful, happy lives and be productive, valued community members.”

In 2020, the Make Waves Family Foundation joined other charitable investors in the publication of the groundbreaking report titled [\*A Place in the World®: Fueling Housing and Community Options for Adults with Autism and Other Neurodiversities\*](#). The Make Waves Center is primed to advance this groundbreaking work and guiding narrative to provide the foundational nomenclature for housing and service delivery models. This work will further define market segments, establish best practices and drive crucial partnerships that address the pressing needs of adults with Autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Aligned with our big vision and dreams for individuals and families living with Autism, Make Waves family members have strategically and thoughtfully invested charitable funds in major growth opportunities at First Place while staying laser-focused on individual impacts and outcomes,” says Resnik. “Through robust collaborations with pioneers across North America and around the world, we aim to make a big splash through the new Make Waves Center.”

The Make Waves Family Foundation has also provided philanthropic support for First Place Transition Academy scholarships and curriculum development, advancement of the *A Place in the World* report, donation-matching special events and Global Leadership Institute symposia. 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 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, 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).

### **About the Make Waves Family Foundation**

The Make Waves Family Foundation strives to fund the most innovative, scalable and replicable programs to address the needs of young adults with Autism and other developmental disabilities. Since 2007, the Make Waves Family Foundation has supported and collaborated with leading experts who provide best practices in residential living, independent/social living skills, and educational and employment programs. Learn more about our impact at [makewaves.blue](http://makewaves.blue).