



For Immediate Review

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Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation Awards \$100,000 to Grow Nutrition and Gardening Programs at First Place AZ

PHOENIX (February 4, 2021) — [Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation](#) has awarded [First Place® AZ](#), an organization that serves individuals with autism and neurodiversities, with a [\\$100,000 grant](#) over two years for its Sprouts First to the Table Gardening and Nutrition Initiative.

Funding will support existing cooking, nutrition and gardening programs at First Place AZ and will allow for the expansion of the gardening program to two additional residential sites in the Valley.

First Place will build two gardens: one at Spectrum Courtyard Apartments (opening early 2021), the second property in collaboration with Foundation for Senior Living—First Place’s partner in 29 Palms, the first inclusive, multigenerational affordable housing development and former First Place beta site. The other will be at Stepping Stone, a nearby affordable housing development by Native American Connections. First Place will also maintain two existing gardens at First Place–Phoenix and 29 Palms through ongoing engagement and mentoring of residents, together with volunteers from the broader community.

First Place will harvest the gardens before bringing select fresh ingredients back to the First Place–Phoenix culinary teaching kitchen for the preparation of nutritious dishes and the buildout of a series of new instructional videos.

First Place AZ’s 81,000-square-foot, \$15.4 million property, First Place–Phoenix, is a residential community with a suite of supports for individuals with autism and other neurodiversities. Ushering in a new era of housing 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.

“Health education and nutrition is important to help First Place residents live healthier and more independent lives,” says Denise D. Resnik, First Place founder, president and CEO. “We are grateful to the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation for their generous community investments and support of individuals with autism and other different abilities to learn, grow and build important life skills.”

This is the third grant Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation has awarded to First Place. In 2019, First Place received a grant for Healthy Harvest Growers Program. Award-winning chef Charleen Badman hosted monthly cooking and gardening classes at First Place AZ and succeeded in creating a loyal following with the desire and interest to adopt healthier lifestyles. The 2016 grant provided seed funding for the Sprouts Kitchen Network's "First to the Table" video series of cooking courses for special populations to help them further hone their independent living skills.

“We’re thrilled to continue our partnership with First Place AZ and to help expand opportunities for residents to participate in hands-on gardening, cooking and nutrition programming,” says Lyndsey Waugh, Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation executive director. “Planting, harvesting and learning basic cooking skills are excellent activities that nurture a connection with nature and that can positively shape health and wellness outcomes for the long term. It will be exciting to watch these programs develop over the next two years and to see how they contribute to the overall culture and resident community at First Place AZ.”

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 neuro-diversity, independent living and the belief that housing 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, serving as a catalyst for advancing public policy focused on housing solutions for special populations. 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.”](#) Learn more at firstplaceaz.org.