

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Southeast Maricopa Region

2020 Impact Report



From birth to age 5, a child's brain grows more than any other time in life.

90%

of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten.
Early childhood matters.

First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Southeast Maricopa Region, there are **68,471 children** (under age 6) with **19% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.



When we address the needs of young children and their families, we prepare our communities for success. Access to education, help with parenting challenges and accurate information all support young children and their families at a time when those resources transform a child's entire life."

Rev. Abigail Conley

Chair of FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

10,108

Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

1,442

Families or caregivers served by receiving referrals or by participating in activities at family resource centers.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

5,678

Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

525

Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.



Preventive Health

1,679

Children received a screening to detect tooth decay, which left undetected and untreated could cause damage to permanent teeth, impair speech development and failure to thrive.

572

Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

Additional Strategies

582

Families with young children

participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.



Family resource center helps Gilbert boy build self-esteem and self-discipline skills

Even though she has a successful career, Kat Somers of Gilbert was like many new moms — unsure she had the skills to be the best parent she could be to her son, Carson. Kat and her fiancé, Kevin, decided that it would be beneficial for Somers to stay-at-home with Carson the first year, because they knew the early years were important.

“I knew being a stay-at-home mom was an important role but didn’t realize that I would struggle,” Somers said. “I have older step-children, so I was not used to parenting little minds and expanding their horizons. I needed help learning how to communicate with Carson and parent in effective ways.”

Needing assistance while not working, Somers started participating in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), who connected her to AZCEND, a family resource center in Gilbert funded by First Things First.

This comprehensive center for families of kids birth to age 5, offers guidance and support for families with young children. The center provides access to resources, referrals to support services and access to educational programs to ensure healthy growth and development for Gilbert’s youngest learners and their families as they grow and thrive together.

When the family first started participating in programs at AZCEND, Somers was concerned because Carson was shy and socially reserved. Somers knew she would return to work and wanted to make sure Carson learned how to communicate to make the transition to child care smooth. With the help of programs offered at the resource center, Somers learned different approaches so that she and her fiancé could help Carson with social skills and also prepare him for kindergarten.

Somers attended parenting classes on topics such as positive parenting and literacy. The more she learned at the center, the more her concerns were eased about her ability to prepare Carson for child care and his educational future.

“These programs helped me to build parenting skills and provided me with meaningful activities that Kevin and I could use at home.”

- Kat Somers, mother

“I started from scratch, because I knew nothing about parenting a young child,” Somers said. “These programs helped me to build parenting skills and provided me with meaningful activities that Kevin and I could use at home. I learned that patience, repetition and environment are key.”

Somers and Carson also attended classes together at AZCEND, covering topics such as music, books and sign language, that helped him build critical skills like self-discipline and self-esteem. Carson also learned to communicate his needs and socialize with other children at the center. The book class taught the family to set a nightly book reading routine, and Carson learned to love books and reading.

Somers attributes Carson’s success to the foundation established from the programs at AZCEND. Today, Carson is friendly and extroverted. He’s already developmentally ahead at child care.

“AZCEND not only helped build my confidence as a parent but also my confidence in Carson,” Somers said. “AZCEND brought out Carson’s personality. The first five years are so important and go quickly, and I’m so happy that Kevin and I can give Carson a head start for his future.”



Read more FTF stories at
FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories

FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven

programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families. Some of the programs in this region include Parents as Teachers, Quality First and First Teeth First.

FTF Southeast Maricopa FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Strengthening Families

\$4,326,381

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$4,093,111

Preventive Health

\$854,305

Research and Evaluation

\$299,224

Parent and Community Awareness

\$186,071

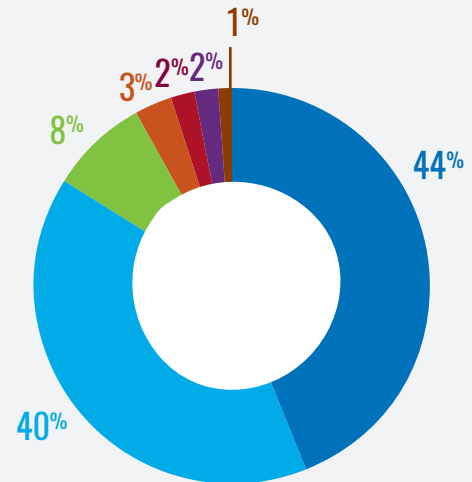
Workforce Development and Training

\$138,043

Coordinating Care

\$69,146

Total \$9,966,282



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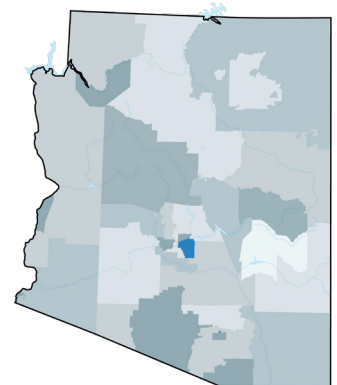
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The **FTF Southeast Maricopa Region** is comprised of several communities within the southeastern portion of Maricopa County and includes Mesa and Gilbert, as well as the parts of Queen Creek and Apache Junction which lie within Maricopa County. It also includes some unincorporated areas adjacent to Mesa or Gilbert. The FTF Southeast Maricopa Region includes Legislative Districts 12, 16, 17, 25 and 26. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at
FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Southeast-Maricopa