

# 2013

ANNUAL REPORT



GILA  
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL



**FIRST THINGS FIRST**

*Ready for School. Set for Life.*

# Why Early Childhood Matters

**Research shows that 80% of a child's brain is formed by age 3; more than 90% by age 5. Because of this rapid development, what happens to children in the early years lays the foundation for a lifetime.** Research has demonstrated that kids with quality early childhood experiences do better in school. They are more likely to advance into college and successful careers. They also tend to be healthier and demand less from the public welfare system.

On November 7, 2006, Arizonans made a historic decision on behalf of our state's smallest citizens. By majority vote, they made a commitment to all Arizona children 5 and younger: that kids would have the tools they need to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

The voters backed that promise with an 80-cent per pack increase on tobacco products, so some reliable funding for early childhood services for our youngest children would be available.

The initiative also created the statewide First Things First Board and the 31 regional partnership councils that share the responsibility of ensuring that these early childhood funds are spent on strategies that will result in improved education and health outcomes for kids 5 and younger.

Not all children have the same needs; and voters designed First Things First to meet the diverse needs of Arizona



communities. Decisions about which early education and health strategies will be funded are made by the 31 regional partnership councils made up of community volunteers. Each regional council member represents a specific segment of the community that has a stake in ensuring that our children grow up to be healthy productive adults, including: parents, tribal representatives, educators, health professionals, business leaders, philanthropists and leaders of faith communities. The regional councils study the challenges faced by children in their communities and the resources that exist to help kids in their area. Because of all these factors, the regional councils know best what their kids need.

**First Things First respects the sovereignty of all Arizona tribes. Tribes may elect to have their tribal lands treated as a separate region by the statewide FTF Board; or, tribes may elect to participate in the designated geographical region in which their tribal lands are located. The Gila Regional Partnership Council includes the communities of Gila County including the tribal lands of the Tonto Apache Tribe.**

## Regional Council Members

Suzanne Yale, <i>Chair</i>	Audrey Opitz
Ann Tolman, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Fernando Shipley
Dr. Diane Bricker	Tashina Smith
Debora Bunney	Kayla Van Cleve
Sherry Dorathy	Carol Welsh
Sharon Moody	

## Tonto Apache Tribe Leadership

Louise Lopez, <i>Chairwoman</i>	Farrell Hoosava, <i>Council Member</i>
Wally Davis, Jr., <i>Vice Chairman</i>	
Donavan Waterman, <i>Council Member</i>	
Junior Tinnin, <i>Council Member</i>	

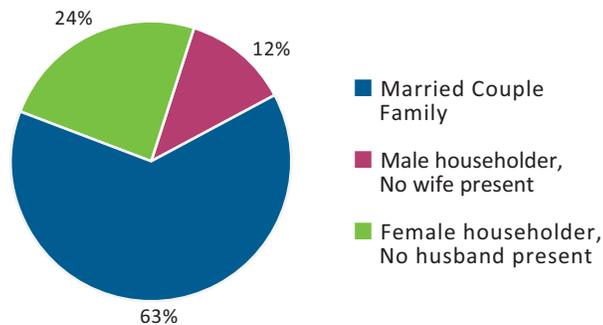
# A SNAPSHOT OF CHILDREN IN OUR REGION

## Demographics

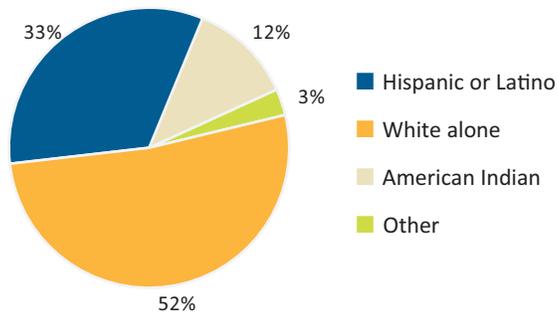
**2,943**

Number of Kids Under 6 in Region

Living Arrangements of Kids Under 6



Ethnic Breakdown of Kids Under 6



**26%**

Percentage of Young Kids in Poverty

## Education

**76%**

Percentage of 3-4 Year-olds in region who don't go to preschool

**15%**

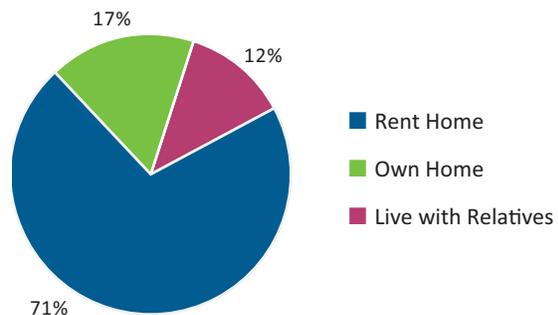
Percent of 3rd grade students not passing AIMS in reading

## Economics

**\$39,630**

Median Family Income

Employment Status of Parents with young kids



## Health

**14%**

Young Children without Health Insurance

**17% of all births**

Births to Teenage Mothers

# OUR REGION'S PRIORITIES

Research regarding children 5 and younger in the Gila region revealed the need for the following programs to promote optimal development and school readiness:

**Access to Quality Child Care** – Research shows that children exposed to high quality early education are more prepared when they enter kindergarten, do better in school, and are more likely to graduate and go on to college. The region has addressed the need for high quality early learning by funding strategies to improve the quality of child care in the region and expand the skills of early educators working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers. In addition, the region has funded scholarships that allow more children ages 5 and younger to access early learning programs.



**Family Support** - The region recognizes parents as the first and most important teachers in their child's life, and funds community-based programs to strengthen families. The programs are voluntary and are offered in a variety of settings to best meet the needs of families. The region's early literacy strategy is held in libraries. Families receive training in how to encourage young children to develop language and books to read at home with their children. Another program is designed specifically for parenting teens. It provides training, case management and support services during pregnancy and the first year of the child's life.

**Health** - Many young children in the region lack access to comprehensive medical, therapeutic, developmental and health screenings that support health. The region's Care Coordination program provides comprehensive health and parenting education, as well as developmental screening to strengthen families' ability to support their child's growth and learning.

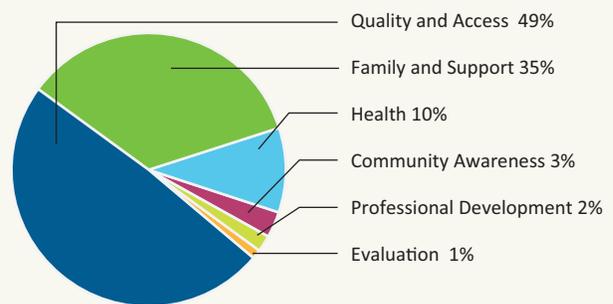
**Community Awareness** - Awareness of the importance of early childhood is crucial to the success of programs in the area. The regional council works to raise the awareness of parents and community stakeholders regarding the importance of getting children healthy and ready for school.

## Financial Report

### EXPENDITURES BY GOAL AREA – FY2013

Quality and Access	\$274,232
Family Support	196,107
Health	57,420
Community Awareness	14,029
Professional Development	9,900
Evaluation	3,297

**TOTAL** **\$554,986**



# OUR REGION'S IMPACT

## Community By Community, Early Learning Opportunities Growing

The small community of Young, Arizona is proud to say that all its young children have access to early education opportunities, thanks to a partnership between Young Elementary Schools and the Gila Regional Council. Families and caregivers of young children can come to the school twice per week with their little ones to grow and learn together.



“The program is helping to nurture strong relationships – between parents and their children and between families and the school,” Superintendent Linda Cheney said.

The sessions emphasize literacy and reading through activities like math, science and art. At the same time, the activities foster the development of social and motor skills.

Shara Garrett said she is thankful the program is available in her small community.

“I feel like my kids are able to get a preschool experience, and that they are learning in ways that I can’t teach them at home,” she said, adding that her kids are learning to work with other children in groups, which prepares them for school.

## Program to Help Young Parents is TOPS

Many parents struggle with the consequences of an unplanned pregnancy. Imagine facing that situation before you are old enough to drive.

Through a grant from the Gila Regional Council, Teen Outreach Pregnancy Services (TOPS) helps pregnant or parenting teens deal with the challenges of birth and child rearing.

The classes offered by TOPS address issues from the importance of prenatal care to what to expect in pregnancy and child birth, as well as how to care for and nurture a child in the critical early years. The classes are offered to both young mothers and fathers, and helps them to meet both their parenting and personal goals.

“We know that these kids are going to do better if they have a plan and if they feel supported in that plan,” said Jessica Black, Regional Director for TOPS.

The program stays with the teen parents throughout the pregnancy and birth, checking on the young parents at the hospital and making sure they are taking their baby home to a safe environment. The case manager also will check in with young parents monthly.

**1341**

PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ATTENDED VOLUNTARY CLASSES IN COMMUNITY-BASED SETTINGS ON TOPICS SUCH AS PARENTING SKILLS, CHILD DEVELOPMENT, LITERACY AND NUTRITION

**8**

CHILD CARE CENTERS AND HOMES OFFER CHILDREN A HIGHER STANDARD OF CHILD CARE THROUGH QUALITY FIRST

**19190**

BOOKS DISTRIBUTED THROUGH PARENT OUTREACH AND AWARENESS.

**70**

INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS TO ACCESS EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

**84**

PREGNANT TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS RECEIVED TRAINING AND COORDINATED CASE MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY PREGNANCY AND PARENTING CLASS TO RAISE HEALTHY CHILDREN.

**276**

CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGHER STANDARD OF CHILD CARE THROUGH QUALITY FIRST

# MOVING FORWARD

The vast, sparsely populated areas of the region continue to challenge the regional council in building a system for early childhood. In FY2013, the regional council implemented parent education programs in Young and Pine/Strawberry. This program will expand in FY2015 to two other rural communities.

The regional council also has worked diligently to build infrastructure for programs to better serve the region. The region is piloting an online developmental screening tool that will allow children to be screened wherever they come in contact with the early childhood system. That program will ensure that children identified with delays receive the support they need. This program also supports improved health outcomes, builds partnerships between community agencies, improves parent education and coordinates medical care.

The regional council will continue to establish partnerships around early childhood issues to leverage its successes and maximize the resources available to young children in Gila County to help them to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

Media, community awareness and outreach continue to be important activities that the Regional Council supports to broaden understanding of the importance of early development.



## Grantees – FY2013

- Arizona Department of Health Services
- Association for Supportive Child Care
- Gila County Department of Public Health
- Gila County Library District
- Pima County Health Department
- Pine Strawberry Unified School District
- Southwest Human Development
- Teen Outreach Pregnancy Services
- University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
- Valley of the Sun United Way
- Young Unified School District

## Gila Regional Partnership Council

### Physical address:

2250 Highway 60, Suite K  
Globe, AZ 85501

### Mailing address:

2250 Highway 60, Suite K  
Miami, AZ 85339

### Hazel Chandler, Regional Director

Phone: (928) 425-8172 | Fax: (928) 425-3129  
hchandler@azftf.gov

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