

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Northwest Maricopa Region

# IMPACT REPORT 2021



[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Northwest-Maricopa](https://FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Northwest-Maricopa)

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 Northwest Maricopa Region, there are **55,078 children** (under age 6) with **20% living in poverty**.

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

“Every child should have the opportunity to attend early childhood education, so they may start attaining knowledge and at the same time making sure that child's physical, emotional and social well-being is balanced so the student will be ready for kindergarten.”

**Veronica De La O**

*Chair of FTF Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council*

## FTF Northwest Maricopa Region Strategic Priorities



### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Northwest Maricopa region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. **Family resource centers** in the region offer a wide range of family activities, programs and referrals to additional services. Families of newborns throughout the region and across the state also receive the **Arizona Parent Kit**, with helpful information and resources to support new parents.



### Quality Preschool and Child Care

Children who attend high-quality early learning programs go on to do better in school and are more likely to graduate. The Northwest Maricopa region provides funding for child care providers and preschool programs to participate in FTF's **Quality First**. Providers benefit from training, coaching and a wide range of evidence-based supports to improve the quality of their early learning programs in ways that help children learn, grow and thrive. The region also funds **Quality First Scholarships** to help low-income families afford quality early learning for their young children.



### Preventive Health

Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on. Left unaddressed, developmental delays and chronic medical conditions can contribute to serious learning problems. FTF works to support the health and development of young children in the Northwest Maricopa region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges. **Oral health screenings and fluoride varnishes** are also offered to protect children against childhood tooth decay, a leading cause of school absences.



## Quality First preschool helps Aguila boy find confidence

He wouldn't stop crying.

No matter what Edi Medina tried, her son Leo did not want to go to preschool.

Leo was attending Aguila Preschool and would arrive home in tears every day. His teachers told Medina that he was crying throughout the day.

But between the teachers at the preschool and his mom, they were determined to make young Leo feel as comfortable as possible.

Aguila Preschool is part of the Aguila Elementary School District and is located about 20 miles west of Wickenburg. The preschool participates in First Things First's signature program Quality First, which works with home-based and center-based child care providers and preschools across Arizona to improve early learning.

Leo had always been shy, and other than his 7-year-old sister, he had no friends. In order to get Leo used to his surroundings and coming to school, instead of sending him home every day because of the crying, his teachers and mom agreed to keep him at school.

Leo also wasn't talking. He comes from a Spanish speaking home, but most of his classmates and teachers spoke English. And when he did speak, he used a few small words, mainly when he needed food or water.

"It took about two months," Medina said. "Sometimes they would shift him back and forth between the classroom and the administrative office so he would get used to everyone. After a couple months Leo loved going to school to see his friends and teachers."

Leo not only made friends in his class, he started speaking more to them in English.

The coping skills that Leo was given at Aguila Preschool helped lay a firm foundation for his learning, Medina said. After being in preschool most of the year and making progress, the COVID-19 pandemic forced families to bring their students home and attend school online. This was not an easy task for any child, let alone a preschooler. However, Leo was not swayed from his progress.

"He was excited to learn and read, and play games with his lessons," Medina said.

As Leo's first day of kindergarten approached, Medina was nervous her son would have problems starting school, but she shouldn't have worried. Leo's first day was a huge success.

"He really likes his teacher, Miss Darby, and loves playing outside at recess," Medina said.

"I'm grateful for the programs of Quality First and First Things First that helped Leo start kindergarten with confidence."

—Edi Medina, parent

Leo tells her he has seven friends he like to hang out with. There isn't an ounce of shyness left and he is speaking in both English and Spanish very well. For Medina, this is a true story of success.

"I'm grateful for the programs of Quality First and First Things First that helped Leo start kindergarten with confidence," she said.

## FTF Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Northwest 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 programs in this region include Quality First, oral health and home visitation.

### FTF Northwest Maricopa SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$6,268,917

Strengthening Families

\$2,283,909

Preventive Health

\$1,287,091

Research and Evaluation

\$357,023

Parent and Community Awareness

\$139,368

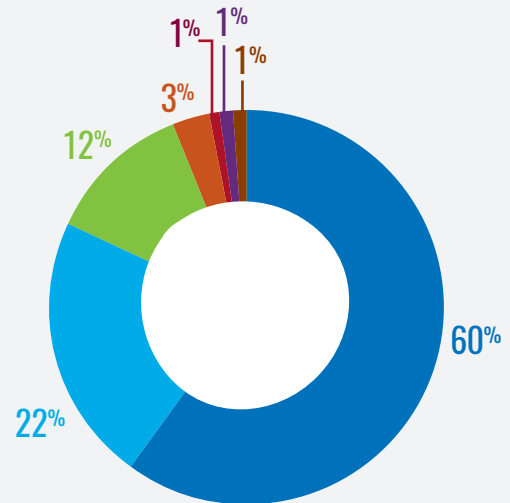
Workforce Development and Training

\$130,001

Coordinating Care

\$53,854

**Total** \$10,520,164



### FTF Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council and Staff

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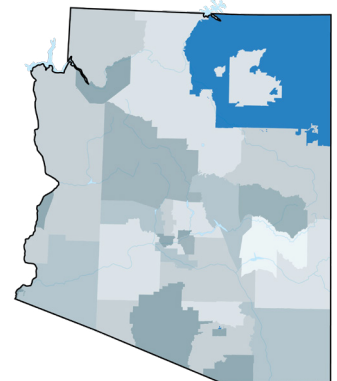
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The **FTF Northwest Maricopa Region** lies entirely in Maricopa County and is densely populated in the east, but very sparsely populated in the west. It includes: six incorporated cities and towns — Peoria, El Mirage, Glendale, Surprise, Wickenburg and Youngtown; several unincorporated places — Aguila, Morristown, Sun City, Sun City West, Waddell and Wittmann; as well as small parts of the city of Phoenix. The FTF Northwest Maricopa Region includes Legislative districts 13, 15, 20, 21, 22, 29 and 30. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at  
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Northwest-Maricopa](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Northwest-Maricopa)