



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

*Ready for School. Set for Life.*

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Angela Mussi,  
Community Outreach Coordinator  
NW & SW Maricopa  
(602) 771-4965 or (602) 370-9579 (c)

## **FIRST THINGS FIRST FUNDS NEW FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

*Families of young children in Gila Bend to benefit from expanded family services*

Gila Bend, Arizona (April 20, 2011) – Families will soon have an easy, one-stop connection to community resources at a new Gila Bend Family Resource Center to be created through a partnership between First Things First, Care1st Health Plan Arizona and the Town of Gila Bend.

The First Things First State Board approved a \$200,000 grant as recommended by the Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council to help renovate a building owned by the Town of Gila Bend. A check symbolizing First Things First's commitment to the project will be presented at the Town Council meeting on Tuesday, April 26, at 6 p.m.

The building, on the town's main thoroughfare at 303 E. Pima St., is now vacant but formerly was the site of a Maricopa County Sheriff's facility. It will take on a very different role as a centralized location for parents to find early childhood information and services and families to seek other programs. Care1st will contribute \$150,000 in funding with the Town contributing an in-kind contribution of \$50,000 in the form of property value and use of the facility.

After a complete renovation, the Family Resource Center is to open in July. Agencies and organizations providing programs and services to families will be recruited to the resource center in Gila Bend with its offer of much-needed satellite office space and equipment. The Town will own, maintain and operate the facility.

The future facility promises to be a center of the community and a hub for early childhood information and referrals.

"One of the major challenges families here face is the fact that they currently have to travel long distances to access early childhood services; they may not have transportation. This center puts those services right in the community, where families can access them more readily," said Eric Santiago, regional director of the First Things First Southwest Maricopa Regional Council. "This project lines up

well with our mission to partner with families to help all kids start school healthy and ready to succeed.”

The Family Resource Center is modeled after the Care1st Avondale Resource Center, which recently won a Best of the West 2010 award from WESTMARC. Services and programs offered at that one-stop resource center, which is also partly supported by the First Things First Southwest Maricopa Regional Council, include parenting education classes, emergency infant and toddler food boxes and health insurance outreach, grandparent raising grandchildren support groups and dozens of others.

“We expect many more service providers who had previously been unable to reach families here in the outlying Maricopa County area will finally have a place to locate and will be better able to provide services to our Gila Bend families,” said Town Manager Frederick Buss. “This will complement our social sustainability efforts, our existing Social Services Department and really expand the number of people we are able to reach.”

-30-

**First Things First (FTF)**, approved by Arizona voters, works to ensure that our youngest children have access to quality early childhood experiences so they will start school healthy and ready to succeed. Across the state, FTF regional partnership councils – in collaboration with local leaders – identify the educational and health needs of children from birth to age 5 in their communities and fund strategies to address those needs.