

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community Region

## 2022 Impact Report



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

# 90% of a child's brain grows before kindergarten. Early childhood matters.

First Things First (FTF) 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 Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Region, there are **626 children** (under age 6) with **57% living in poverty**.

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

“ I believe that early childhood is a time to provide opportunities so that our children may enter Kindergarten with the language and social skills needed to continue growing as they enter the formal education system. I value the fact that FTF recognizes the importance of good health and healthy relationships for families and children, supporting a strong, vibrant community.”

**Chris McIntier**

*Chair of FTF Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council*

## FTF Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Key Impact Highlights

[State Fiscal Year 2022]

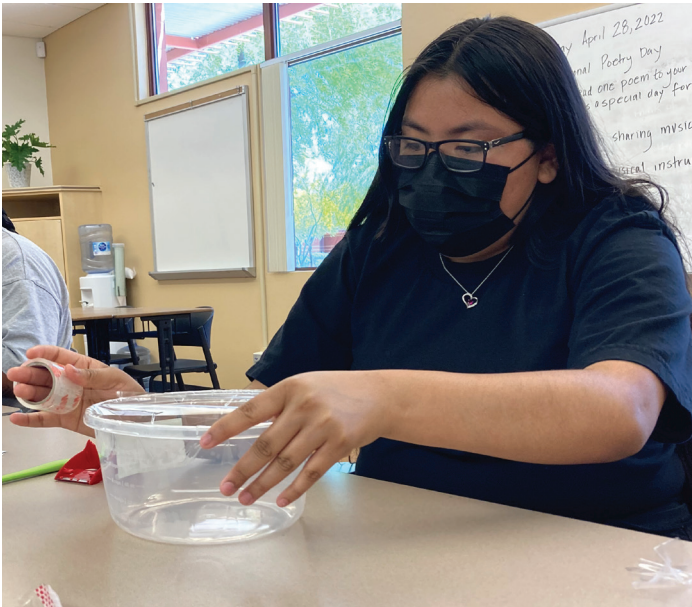
### **Strengthening Families and Early Literacy**

**236** Books were given to families with children birth to age 5 to encourage parent-child interaction and reading.

**13** Adults attended parenting classes to learn about early child care development.

### **Quality Preschool and Child Care**

**4** Early childhood educators received college scholarships to improve their qualifications for working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



## Teen parenting program nurtures relationship between young parents and their children

As high school seniors, Darcie Silversmith and Selby Leonard not only juggle academics, but they're also raising a toddler. Every day between classes, the teens attend a school program that provides young moms and dads insight into the intricacies of parenthood.

The Promoting Nurturing Parenting program brings together Silversmith, Leonard and other student parents at Salt River Academy of Accelerated Learning in Scottsdale for discussion and mutual support. In a typical week, the young parents focus on their academic studies, but they also take time to talk freely about parenting issues, said Margaret Lehn, a parent educator who teaches the classes.

The First Things First Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council funds the program to provide family support given the number of children living in poverty and the high percentage of children living with a mother 19 years of age and younger in the region.

This semester's program includes two eight-week courses, one focused on the importance of healthy food for children and another on the role of music on child development. Students earn high school credit, along with college credit from Scottsdale Community College.

The first course "is really about thinking differently about healthy eating and how healthy eating impacts the brain and early learning development," Lehn said.

Similarly, the music class explores the effect of music and movement on young children and "how music really offers some opportunities for enhancing your environment in a fun and loving way, for making connections with your children using music."

For Silversmith and Leonard, both 18, the courses are providing them with valuable skills on raising their daughter, Addalyn confidently.

"My daughter, she knows how to throw, she knows how to catch," Silversmith said. "I've been teaching her a lot, but it's this class that helped me learn those things so I could teach her."

Since Adalynn already loves music, she responds quickly when her mom plays it to see if the toddler will break out in dance.

"She just does," her mom said, and smiled. "She dances to whatever. It's kind of funny."

Something else Silversmith said she appreciates about the program is being able to connect with other young parents.

"It helps me a lot to know that there are other parents in the class that actually are going through the same thing I'm going through or have been through," she said.

She and Leonard make it a point to engage in activities at home with their daughter that they learn about in class.

"When we were learning to cook, we were doing that with her," Leonard said of Adalynn, who is almost 2. "She would help us with the food and stuff – or she would just sit there and eat it, too."

In Lehn's class, the young parents also take time to meditate, write in journals and learn about child safety. There is also a literacy component that gives students credit for reading to their children at least 20 minutes a day.

The goal is for these nurturing parenting practices to lay the foundation for a healthy parent-child relationship, Lehn said. Children benefit because they're learning skills from their young parents through shared activities, such as reading.

"And really, more than anything, having that foundation of the secure base so that when they go to school, they're feeling very confident and comfortable to be able to be away from mom or dad for that period of time using the information that they already have, the academic information," she said. "But what's really important is the relationship that they have with their parents."

# FTF Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

FTF regional partnership councils are made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and inform 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.

## FTF Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Strengthening Families

\$43,889

Preventive Health

\$24,160

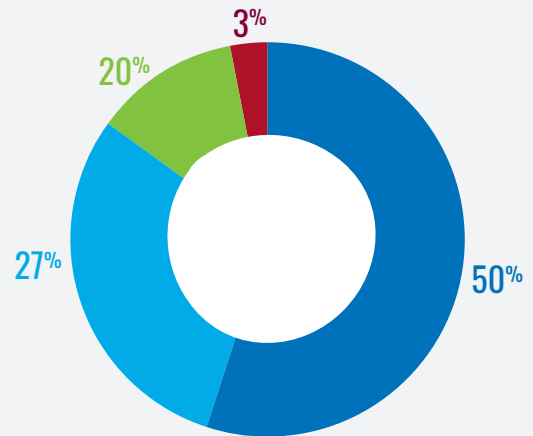
Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$17,609

Research and Evaluation

\$3,523

**Total** \$88,181



## FTF Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council and Staff

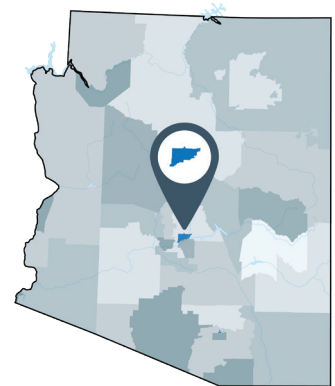
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*The FTF Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, a sovereign tribe located 15 miles northeast of Phoenix, is one of 10 Arizona tribes that have chosen to be designated as its own First Things First region. The region has the same boundaries as the Salt River Reservation and covers about 85 square miles, entirely within Maricopa County, bordering the cities of Scottsdale, Tempe, Mesa and Fountain Hills. The Community is home to the Pima ("Akimel O'Odham," River People) and the Maricopa ("Xalychidom Pipaash," People who live toward the water).*

Learn more at  
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Salt-River-Pima-Maricopa-Indian-Community](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Salt-River-Pima-Maricopa-Indian-Community)