Think and 'do' tank
Our stand: Lattie Coor's new venture

plans to dust off visions for Arizona, Valley

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t's about time somebody thought of it.
How about clearing off the dust
from all those scholarly reports and
special investigations and putting them to good use?
As in ... trying to get something done about the many problems confronting greater Phoenix and Arizona.
That's the task Lattie Coor has carved out for himself and his newly established Center for the Future of Arizona, an am-biSus name for a daunting project. The center is a think tank ... make that a "do" tank, suggests Coor, who recently retired as president of Arizona State University.
Coor and his partner, Sybil Francis, a public policy specialist and wife of new ASU President Michael Crow, insist their center will focus on action and accom-plishment, not on producing another re-port for the dusty shelf.
They plan to tackle a handful of clearly defined goals from their down-town Phoenix office. Like coming up with a new vision for Arizona, one that will be so compelling and persuasive that it will command attention and alle-giance.
For the first 75 years of Arizona's statehood, the vision of "growth" in-spired citizens of all ranks. But once that vision broke down, Coor says, "There has been no replacement vision" for the Valley and state. .
And so greater Phoenix and Arizona move in fits and starts, in several direc-tions at once, gaining little traction. And making little progress.
Coor, Francis and a growing number of others believe that we can't get any-where if we're not really sure of where we want to go in the first place.
Wisely, Coor isn't going to try to rein-vent the wheel. He's not starting from ground zero.
With years in the Valley, Coor is aware of the numerous documents, studies and reports that have been released in recent years.
He is also respectful of the various in-stitutes that have offered thoughtful, well-researched materials, including The Morrison Institute of Public Policy at
ASU and the free-market Goldwater In-stitute. He also plans to tap the newly created Arizona Center for Public Policy, which promises a nonpartisan examina-

Lattie
Coor

Sybil
Francis

tion of serious state is-sues.

Other institutions —
St. Luke's Health Initia-tives project, non-profit associations and pri-
vate agencies — have also produced useful
studies on a variety of
topics.
Coor proposes that
his "do tank" examine
the published materials and research on specif-ic issues and then try to build consensus for an action agenda.
Coor is a perfect fit
for the task. He knows the Valley, its leaders,
its players, its smartest people, the people who
can get things done and
those who can help pay
for it.
Francis, who serves
as executive director,
brings a keen intellect and a newcomer's fresh eye to the challenges facing Ari-zona. She has dealt with national issues in Washington, DC.
As the center's initial focus, Coor has selected the state's abysmal high school dropout rate. An estimated one of three students entering ninth grade fails to graduate, but nobody is sure of the num-bers. The center wants to determine the exact extent of the problem and then fig-ure out ways to keep kids in school. Other topics likely to be on the cen-ter's agenda are finding ways to strengthen opportunities for the working poor and developing and encouraging new leadership.
The Center for the Future of Arizona aims to fill a critical need. Its principal sponsors are not funding it to keep Coor busy. Coor, in fact, is putting his consid-erable prestige on the line.
The challenges are many, whether it's providing more economic opportunities for Arizonans from all walks of life, building a more competitive knowledge-based economy, nurturing new leaders or keeping students in school.
Lattie Cpor, a man we have come to admire and expect big things from, is of-fering to help.
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