



## NEWS RELEASE

### 10 ARIZONA COMMUNITY PROJECTS SELECTED AS FINALISTS IN "FIVE COMMUNITIES" COMPETITION

#### Center for the Future of Arizona Seeks to Increase Civic Involvement, Strengthen Communities

**PHOENIX** (Sept. 8, 2011) – Ten finalists have been selected for the Five Communities Project sponsored by the Center for the Future of Arizona and will be profiled at the 66th National Conference on Citizenship to be held in Arizona on September 22 and 23.

The Five Communities Project was created to find the best ideas for strengthening Arizona at the local level. Communities of all kinds were invited to submit their big ideas for moving Arizona forward on one or more of the eight citizen goals identified by the Gallup Arizona Poll in *The Arizona We Want* report. Finding ways to involve citizens in both planning and implementation is a key part of the selection criteria.

The 10 finalists, representing communities from across Arizona, were chosen from a diverse group of 31 semifinalists. Each of the 10 finalists will receive \$5,000 to help offset the costs of developing a detailed, final proposal. Before year end, five communities will be chosen by a national selection panel to create action plans and to jointly apply with the center for the national funding to implement the plans over a three-year period.

The 10 finalists will be recognized during the National Conference on Citizenship at a 7:30 a.m., Friday, September 23 breakfast event at the Memorial Union on the Tempe campus of Arizona State University. Lattie Coor, chairman and CEO of the Center for the Future of Arizona, will introduce each finalist and showcase their ideas. He will also release the results of the *2011 Arizona Civic Health Index*.

Three of the 10 finalists are focusing on job creation. They include **The Arizona Wine Growers Association**, representing Arizona's emerging wine industry in **Cochise, Santa Cruz and Yavapai counties**; **Gangplank**, a **Chandler** incubator that wants to expand its impact by moving into new communities and developing programs for future innovators in high schools and community colleges; and the **International Sonoran Desert Alliance**, whose goal is to transform the community of **Ajo** from its historic reliance on mining into a place that offers diverse employment, good health and a town center vibrant with civic life.

Two finalists' projects focus on education, and also have strong economic development implications. The **Arizona State University College of Technology and Innovation** is partnering with the **Girl Scouts of America, Cactus Pine Council** to increase the number of Navajo girls pursuing an education and careers in science, technology, engineering and math. The **Vail Unified School District** in **southern Arizona** has assembled a cadre of partners to develop shared, attainable goals for education, job creation and the environment in a diverse rural/suburban community with two out of three homeowners now underwater.

The **Desert Botanical Garden** and the **Prescott Creeks Preservation Association** were selected for the big ideas and plans they offer that address environmental issues. The Desert Botanical Garden wants to restore and preserve the mountain park preserves of Greater Phoenix, the largest set of wildland preserves of any major metropolitan region. Prescott Creeks Preservation Association hopes to implement the Granite Creek Greenway - Headwaters to the Verde River concept to unify and integrate management of this vital resource.

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Three other finalists are focused on increasing civic involvement in their communities. **The Arizona Center for Empowerment** hopes to increase participation through a targeted Latino voter engagement campaign, and by increasing the number of Latino leaders who serve on Phoenix boards and commissions. **Valley Interfaith Project** is launching an initiative to prepare 200 grassroots leaders in three Phoenix neighborhoods to connect their local schools, faith institutions and local non-profits to ensure children have a clear pathway to post-secondary education and that adults can enter workforce training to secure middle-class jobs. The **YWCA Tucson** hopes to transform their community by empowering Spanish-speaking, immigrant women to assume powerful roles as informed, actively involved citizens in educational and government affairs.

Additional information about the National Conference on Citizenship and the Five Communities Project can be found at [www.TheArizonaWeWant.org](http://www.TheArizonaWeWant.org).

#### **FIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT SELECTION COMMITTEE**

The national selection committee includes Kristen Cambell, National Conference on Citizenship; Paula Ellis, The Knight Foundation; Cynthia Gibson, The Philanthropic Initiative; Pat Gottfried, University of Phoenix Foundation; Roger Hughes, St. Luke's Health Initiatives; Courtney Klein Johnson, Indie; Ruth McGregor, retired chief justice, Arizona Supreme Court; Robert Millis, Flagstaff Forty; Colleen Niccum, Raytheon Missile Systems; Steve Seleznow, Arizona Community Foundation; Michael Weiser, chairman of the board, National Conference on Citizenship.

#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP (NCoC)**

The National Conference on Citizenship ([www.ncoc.net](http://www.ncoc.net)) was founded in 1946 and chartered by Congress in 1953. Its mission is to advance the nation's civic life. In addition to the annual National Conference on Citizenship, NCoC produces "America's Civic Health Index," an annual study that measures America's civic habits across a wide range of indicators in an effort to strengthen citizen participation in their communities, states and nation. Arizona was selected as the site for the 66th National Conference on Citizenship, the first time in its history the conference has been held outside Washington, D.C.

#### **ABOUT THE CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ARIZONA**

The Center for the Future of Arizona ([www.arizonafuture.org](http://www.arizonafuture.org)) is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its mission is to help Arizonans shape and define the future through an action-oriented agenda focused on contemporary issues and topics critical to the state. More than a think tank, the center is an independent "do tank" that combines public-policy research with collaborative partnerships and initiatives that will create new opportunities for all Arizonans.

During the past 20 months, the center has systematically worked to embed the citizens' agenda described by *The Arizona We Want* into policy planning and public discussions at both state and local levels. In addition to the Five Communities Project, the center launched the Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards in June 2011 to recognize outstanding service among the more than 100,000 professional employees working in all levels of Arizona government.

For more information about The Arizona We Want Institute, the Five Communities Project and the Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards, visit [www.TheArizonaWeWant.org](http://www.TheArizonaWeWant.org).

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