



## NEWS RELEASE

**RELEASE DATE: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2011**

### **FIVE ARIZONA COMMUNITY PROJECTS SELECTED AS WINNERS IN "FIVE COMMUNITIES" COMPETITION**

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

**PHOENIX** (Dec. 6, 2011) – Winners have been selected for the inaugural Five Communities Project sponsored by the Center for the Future of Arizona. The five projects will jointly apply with the center for \$1.5 million in funding (\$100,000/year over a three-year period or \$300,000 per project) from national organizations to implement their proposals.

The five winners, representing communities from across Arizona, were chosen from a group of 10 finalists by a national selection panel.

Three winners focus on job creation in their community. 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.

**Desert Botanical Garden and the Conservation Alliance** was selected for the big ideas and plans they offer that address environmental issues. The collaborative partnership wants to restore and preserve the mountain park preserves of Greater Phoenix, the largest set of wildland preserves of any major metropolitan region.

The fifth winning community is **YWCA Tucson**, whose proposal focuses on increasing civic involvement in its community. YWCA Tucson plans to transform the community by empowering Spanish-speaking, immigrant women to assume powerful roles as informed, actively involved citizens in educational and government affairs.

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* research report. Finding ways to involve citizens in both planning and implementation was a key part of the selection criteria. Ninety-six initial proposals were received from communities around the state.

Ten finalists were selected in September from a group of 31 diverse semifinalists and given \$5,000 to help develop a detailed, final proposal.

(more)

The center will continue to work with the other five finalists that were not selected as winners – The Arizona Center for Empowerment, Valley Interfaith Project, Prescott Creeks Preservation Association, Vail Unified School District, and Arizona State University College of Technology and Innovation in partnership with Girl Scouts of America, Cactus Pine Council – to find ways to build and strengthen their communities.

More information about the Five Communities Project and the winners 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; and Michael Weiser, chairman of the board, National Conference on Citizenship.

#### **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 two years, 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).

###