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First Things First honors a Champion for Young Children in Flagstaff

FLAGSTAFF (June 19, 2015) – First Things First recognizes Ruth Ellen Elinski as a 2015 First Things First Champion for Young Children in the Coconino Region.

The First Things First Champion for Young Children award is given to local champions who actively volunteer their time to raise public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and health. Champions spend a significant amount of time volunteering with FTF and building public awareness about the importance of early childhood issues.

Ruth Ellen Elinski, Executive Director for the Coconino Coalition for Children and Youth, spends her free time volunteering with First Things First and spreading the word of the importance of early childhood education.

“Giving young children the building blocks early, will give them the tools to learn, engage, and be successful throughout life, from kindergarten, through school and to college or career, and on as parents and contributing members of the community,” Elinski said.

Elinski has served as CCC&Y’s Director since May 2010. She graduated from Indiana University from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and has an extensive background in business and nonprofit management.

Elinski participates in various community initiatives and boards including the Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force, Flagstaff’s Commission on Excellence in Education, and the First Things First Benchmarking Committee among others. She was the 2013 recipient of the Athena Young Professional Award presented by the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce and a Fellow of the Flinn-Brown Civic Leadership Academy.

Elinski believes community engagement is the single most effective pathway to positive change for young people and continues to encourage productive dialogue, education, self-engagement, and action around all issues impacting children and youth.

“All people deserve the same opportunities to be successful,” she said. “If we give all children the same start: access to healthy, active, creative learning opportunities, there will be better outcomes for all. We all want healthy, productive, thriving communities. This is achieved through early investment in children.”

The awareness-raising efforts Elinski has demonstrated include:

- Served on a First Things First volunteer committee.
- Regularly hosted informational tables to raise awareness about resources to families and providers

- Organized and supported the early childhood fairs across the regions.
- Gave presentations to college students on ways to message and advocate for early learning.
- Wrote letters to the editor about the importance of supporting early education professionals.
- Voiced her experiences as a mom to raise awareness with local leaders about the importance of investing in early childhood.

For more information about Elinski and the Coconino Regional Partnership Council please visit: <http://www.azftf.gov/pages/yourregionalcouncil.aspx> and click on your region.

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About First Things First – First Things First is a voter-created, statewide organization that funds early education and health programs to help kids be successful once they enter kindergarten. Decisions about how those funds are spent are made by local councils staffed by community volunteers. To learn more, visit azftf.gov.