



Strong Start Tucson fills kids' red wagons with signatures to place preschool education scholarships on City of Tucson November ballot

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TUCSON, Ariz. (July 6, 2017) – Strong Start Tucson turned in more than 25,000 signatures to the City of Tucson Election Services office today. The signatures arrived in style, filling four red Radio Flyer wagons and accompanied by kids, parents and volunteers supporting the campaign to create preschool education scholarships in the City of Tucson. The ballot initiative will be part of the city-wide general election vote set for Tuesday, November 7, 2017.

“We want Tucson to join other visionary cities, counties and states who invest in high-quality preschool as one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce poverty, improve the economic climate of their communities and create a path for each child to be successful,” said Penelope Jacks, chair of the Strong Start Campaign Committee.

Jamie Ratner said he is a living example of what early childhood education offers, giving him a lifelong love of learning and the tools to complete college, a master’s degree and law school.

“Everyone deserves that start. I was lucky, my mom was the director of a preschool, and my education and curiosity to want to know more began at the age of three,” said Ratner, Strong Start Tucson treasurer and a professor at the University of Arizona’s James E. Rogers College of Law. “It’s served me well and I want others to have this opportunity to reach their full potential.”

Joining in the appeal for early-preschool education was Tiffany Simon, an early childhood education specialist with Child and Family Resources.

“Ninety percent of our brains develop by the age of five,” Simon said. “We have learned over the past 25 years, that every dollar invested in a high-quality preschool education for our three and four-year-olds saves our society \$7 later. Children who complete preschool education are: ready to learn, do not repeat grades, do not engage in crime and do complete higher education and technical training.”

The City of Tucson has 14,000 three and four-year-olds. Only 16 percent of them are enrolled in a high-quality preschool curriculum, Simon added.

Magda Morales, a grandmother who helps her daughter raise her children, showed her support of high-quality preschool by bringing the piles of signatures to the City of Tucson Election Services Office.

“I want all my grandchildren to benefit from a great, preschool education program,” she said. “I want them to be able to go to a preschool where: I know they are safe, the teachers are professionals and the children are engaged in fun learning activities. My heart breaks when I see so many working mothers with children who can’t send their little ones to preschool. We have to give our children every opportunity to be successful.”

About Strong Start Tucson:

The Strong Start Tucson Campaign Committee is organized by a group of local parents and educators to fund pre-school education through a city-wide ½ cent sales tax. The Strong Start Tucson model builds on the success of publicly-supported models in Denver, West Sacramento and San Antonio, where a sales tax supports access to quality early education. For more information about how to help Strong Start Tucson by volunteering or donating, visit the group’s website at www.strongstarttucson.org.

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