



Media Advisory

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Southwest Human Development to host MAKERS of Change Assistive Technology Challenge to benefit children with disabilities

PHOENIX—Southwest Human Development is gearing up to host the annual MAKERS of Change Assistive Technology Challenge to benefit young children with disabilities.

Since 2018, the [MAKERS of Change](#) challenge has engaged Valley high school coding, robotics and technology teams to troubleshoot and create “real-world” solutions that will help improve the lives of young children with disabilities.

Nicknamed the “STEM Challenge with Heart,” the MAKERS Challenge is modeled after young children seen at the organization’s ADAPT Shop, a space where every project begins with an idea based on a need and ends with a life improved. The 2023 Challenge was designed in partnership with providers from both the ADAPT Shop and Foundation for Blind Children (FBC), who have been collaborating to meet both the occupational and vision therapy needs of children in Maricopa County.

“Our goal in hosting the MAKERS Challenge is two-fold – we hope to both inspire the younger generation to understand and consider the needs of children as they approach engineering solutions and to encourage more students from underserved communities to consider careers in STEM fields,” said Jessica Brandt, Vice President, Services for Children with Disabilities at Southwest Human Development.

“Approximately 90% of a child’s learning occurs through vision and imitation.” Says Alissa Eromae, Director of Early Intervention and Research at FBC. “Children with visual impairments require additional support to foster their learning and active engagement with the world around them. The MAKERS Challenge offers a fun and creative way to explore the development of new tools to help young children play and learn.”

There is no cost for schools to enter the Challenge, but corporate support is raised to both fund the program administration and the ongoing needs of the ADAPT Shop. AstraZeneca, onsemi, Cox Charities, Avnet and Valley Toyota Dealers are the 2023 Challenge sponsors.

The top nine teams in three categories are invited to the Finalist Team Presentation on Oct. 20 at the Foundation for Blind Children campus at 1234 E. Northern Ave in Phoenix, Arizona 85020. Teams are evaluated on a variety of objectives such as anticipated cost, usability by both the

child and family and integrity of the build. Three teams will win \$100 each and there will be one overall “Best in Show” team that wins a \$500 prize.

About Southwest Human Development

Southwest Human Development is Arizona’s largest nonprofit dedicated to early childhood development. Recognizing a child’s earliest experiences and relationships establish the foundation for all future development, Southwest Human Development’s more than 40 comprehensive programs focus on young children—ages birth to 5—and their families in the areas of child development, mental health, Easterseals disabilities services, Head Start, early literacy, family support and child welfare, and professional development and training. Founded in 1981, Southwest Human Development serves 140,000 children and families each year. Learn more at www.swhd.org.

About the Foundation for Blind Children

The Foundation for Blind Children provides education, tools and services to create opportunities for anyone with vision loss to achieve greater independence. FBC serves the blind and visually impaired of all ages, from birth to currently 104 years old. With three Valley locations (East, West and Central Phoenix), FBC strives to be “the” community resource for blind, visually impaired and multiply disabled children, adults and their families. Learn more at www.seeitourway.org.

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