

Written by Tyler Hollis

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As a technology company committed to keeping us connected, Cox awarded [First Place® AZ](#) a \$35,000 grant funding an Alexa smart device for each resident living at the innovative apartment community. The Cox grant will also fund new, soon-to-be-deployed iPads for First Place residents that can further enhance their transition to independence through technology. Cox is the communications provider of choice for First Place–Phoenix, with broadband connections that power the residents' many devices, as well as services for the First Place staff of providers and educators.

“Supporting young adults and individuals with different abilities of all ages through technology is a great honor for Cox,” says Susan Anable, vice president of public affairs, Cox Southwest Region. “We are thrilled to have been there for First Place from the start at the groundbreaking and more recently through major employment initiatives for their residents.”

In a time when routines are disrupted by COVID-19 and the ability to provide in-home support is not always possible, Cox wants to ensure First Place residents are supported with new technologies helping them learn and grow in their independence and confidence.

Denise D. Resnik, founder, president, and CEO of First Place AZ reports that the property currently serves as home to more than 50 people with autism, including Resnik's son, Matt.

Resnik acknowledges several ways Alexa has been a great teacher and opened up Matt's world. He has learned to more clearly enunciate desired responses, which include Alexa helping him create a grocery list, playing his favorite Beatles music, checking the weather forecast so Matt can lay his clothes out for the next day, and even playing karaoke. \_\_\_\_\_ Alexa is also paired with his iPad, providing reminders about Community Life events and connecting to his doorbell so he knows who is at his front door.



“Matt is not always easily understood, so we make accommodations,” explains Resnik. “But Alexa is not as accommodating, requiring him to slow down and speak more clearly. He is also learning to solve problems by asking for help through Alexa, including maintenance requests.” (to\_\_\_\_\_.)

Another resident, Lauren, has Asperger's syndrome and is sight-impaired. She uses Alexa to remind her about First Place CommunityLife activities like yoga and Zoom-style Zumba where she participates and follows protocols, including facemask wearing, hand sanitizing, and physical distancing. In addition, she uses her Alexa to remind her when to wake up, add items to her grocery list, and refill a prescription. Lauren now wants to try using Alexa to listen to

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audiobooks and find interesting meditations.

The staff at First Place have spent time teaching residents how to best engage with their Alexas, customizing the devices based on each resident's particular needs. "The combination of high touch and high tech is a winning combination," says Resnik. "Alexa is allowing our residents and staff to grow in exciting ways."

### **About First Place® AZ**

First Place AZ is a nonprofit charitable organization advancing innovative residential options for adults with autism and other neurodiversities. First Place is creating replicable residential and post-secondary education models that promote collaboration among the public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors, serving as a catalyst for advancing public policy focused on housing solutions for special populations. First Place celebrates neurodiversity, independent living, and the belief that housing options for people with autism and other special abilities should be as bountiful as they are for everyone else. Leasing is ongoing. View PBS NewsHour's two-part series at ["Giving Adults with Autism the Skills to Build Independent Lives"](#) and ["How Phoenix Became the Most Autism-Friendly City in the World."](#) Learn more at [firstplaceaz.org](http://firstplaceaz.org).