

# OPEN TABLE PRESS RELEASE



## Thunderbirds Charities Awards Zion Institute \$80,000 to Expand its Early Childhood Education Excellence and Capacity Building Model in South Phoenix, Arizona

### The Phoenix Police Department and Open Table are Convening the Business Community



The early childhood education excellence and capacity building movement is led by Shawn Pearson, Founder and CEO of Zion Institute, a resident of South Phoenix. A twelve-month pilot of Zion's PS-EXCELLENCE™ (Preschool Excellence) model has empowered a startup preschool to become a Quality First, financially sustainable, surplus generating organization. As a result of these outcomes, the preschool, Zion Early Learning Academy (ZELA), is now in the process of purchasing its building and land.

*"Quality, accessible early childhood education is an essential facet of an equitable and prosperous community," said Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego. "This model, combining the Zion Institute's expertise with cross-sector community support, will not only benefit South Phoenix families for generations to come but will bring cascading benefits for our entire city."*

Funding from Thunderbirds Charities will support the launch of Life Changers, the next preschool implementing the PS-EXCELLENCE model. In honor of the gift, Life Changers preschool space will be named “The Thunderbirds Imagination Learning Center.” The Phoenix Police Department and Open Table are partners with Zion and will be organizing the social capital of the business community to support the expansion.

## THE ZION MODEL



*“Our focus is on long term impact through the disruption of our community’s generational preschool to prison pipeline. PS-EXCELLENCE powers the future of South Phoenix by creating economic mobility, neighborhood safety and development and community wealth. When I look at the children in ZELA, I see leaders not inmates or single parents dependent on government assistance struggling for a lifetime to just survive,”* said Pearson.

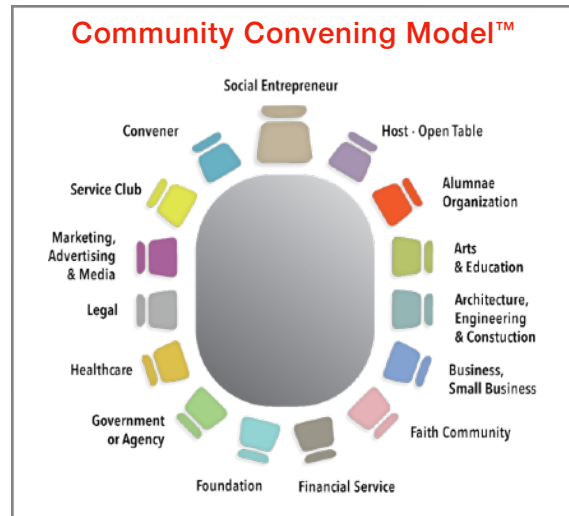
Zion’s PS-EXCELLENCE model is trained over a 12-month timeframe. It trains new and existing preschool owners and their teams in the best practices of management, quality education, finance and human resources. A Zion consultant is embedded in the preschool during the year to train staff while it operates. Technical support, access to new training and a peer-to-peer learning community are ongoing.

## ACCESS TO COMMUNITY SOCIAL CAPITAL

*“Preschool entrepreneurs also need access to the same types of social capital that helps start-ups in Silicon Valley grow into successful enterprises,”* said Pearson. *“They need relationships with community sectors such as the arts, business, education, faith communities, finance, foundations, healthcare, legal and other sectors. Our model integrates Open Table’s Community Convening™ process to access business community social capital. Community Convening brought powerful social capital to ZELA and long-term business relationships to Zion.”*

The Phoenix Police Department, together with Zion, serves as a Convener and a founding sponsor of the Community Convening initiative developing a network of preschools of excellence in South Phoenix and beyond. Mike Kurtenbach, Executive Assistant Chief of the Phoenix Police Department said, *“We believe in the creativity, commitment and vision of social entrepreneur CEOs in South Phoenix, like Shawn Pearson, who is transforming her community. Through Community Convening, we are inviting the Phoenix business community to see the same future we do.”*

The Open Table Community Convening model trains social entrepreneurs in communities and the business sector to create partnerships that empower social change. Jon Katov, Founder and CEO of Open Table said, *“Relationships are the conduit for the social capital that grows businesses. Social entrepreneurs in South Phoenix developing preschools don’t want charity, they are asking for the business relationships and social capital that scales organizations and their models. Businesses in Phoenix truly want to open their skills and networks to the South Phoenix community. Community Convening builds the bridge and trains both to meet in the middle.”*



## ABOUT ZION INSTITUTE



The Zion Institute, with its network of service partners, provides resources to individuals and organizations designed to stimulate economic growth, revitalize neighborhoods, and strengthen social bonds among people. Since 2010, Zion Institute has helped to launch or enhance 41 resident-owned small businesses and organizations, stimulating an estimated \$2M in economic activity in the area, and has served 300 children and families through Zion Early Learning Academy.

## ABOUT THUNDERBIRD CHARITIES

Thunderbirds Charities was established in 1986 as the charitable arm of the Phoenix Thunderbirds. Its purpose is to grant funds generated by the Waste Management Phoenix Open. The mission of Thunderbirds Charities is to support organizations that assist children and families, help people in need and improve the quality of life in the Greater Phoenix Metropolitan Area. Each year, Thunderbirds Charities solicits grant proposals that support at-risk youth and families, community outreach/quality of life, education, improving the lives of the physically and mentally challenged, or works to eliminate domestic violence/homelessness/poverty.

## ABOUT OPEN TABLE

Relational and social capital are the source of human development. When they are freely accessible, everyone can flourish. When they are out of reach, human potential collapses. In Open Table, relational capital is a sustaining, reciprocal, social connectedness between people in which each party gives to and receives support from the other. Social capital is a person’s own knowledge, skills, and social networks.

Through the grassroots models of Open Table, organizations provide access to transformational resources for people with complex needs and communities working to create social change. These models have trained thousands of people and organizations (non-profit, for-profit and government) in twenty-nine states to organize the relational and social capital of the community. Businesses, community-based organizations, faith communities, government and community agencies, healthcare systems, schools and universities are implementing Open Table models. Social entrepreneurs in communities that have never had access to these resources are using them to develop sustainability and scale.

Open Table believes that relational and social capital are not about win-win culture; rather, relational and social capital seek to build a society in which everyone wins.

## **For more information, please contact:**

### **Zion Institute**

Shawn Pearson, Founder and CEO

[shawn@thezioninstitute.org](mailto:shawn@thezioninstitute.org)

[www.thezioninstitute.org](http://www.thezioninstitute.org)

### **Phoenix Police Department**

Mike Kurtenbach, Executive Assistant Chief

[mike.kurtenbach@phoenix.gov](mailto:mike.kurtenbach@phoenix.gov)

[www.phoenix.gov/police](http://www.phoenix.gov/police)

### **Open Table**

Jon Katov, Founder and CEO

[jonkatov@theopentable.org](mailto:jonkatov@theopentable.org)

[www.theopentable.org](http://www.theopentable.org)