When we founded First Things First seventeen years ago, we hoped the foundation would sustain for many years to come. We began with a few programs and continued to add more over the years as new opportunities arose and we felt called to serve in new ways. It’s incredible to look back at the ways God blessed those programs in the past and even more remarkable to see how He is continuing to provide for our programs in the present despite the fact that Kurt hasn’t stepped on the field as an active player in eight years. We are so grateful for His continued provision and your support in helping First Things First continue to make a difference.

God Bless,

Opportunities Sustained

During the 2017 NFL season, Kurt continued to serve as a color analyst for Westwood One’s radio coverage of Monday Night Football. Four tickets for each of those games were once again given to the Veteran Tickets Foundation for military veterans to enjoy the excitement. As part of the experience, all four guests had the opportunity to visit Kurt in the radio booth for a behind-the-scenes look as well as photos and autographs. Veteran Tickets Foundation teams up with major sports teams, leagues, promoters, organizations, venues and ticket holders to provide tickets to the more than 21 million Military and Veterans. VetTix currently distributes tickets to Serving Military and Honorably Discharged Veterans from all branches of service as well as family of those Killed In Action. To make a ticket donation, visit www.vettix.org.

“Thank you so much for the Broncos tickets. My wife and I have never been to an NFL game and always wanted to. It was great meeting Kurt Warner. Thank you again for your generous donation. It was much needed after a very difficult year.”
On July 16th, seven Make-A-Wish and Dream Factory families from Arizona (2), Missouri (4), and Illinois (1) met Kurt, Brenda, and their kids for the first time at a welcome dinner at Epcot. For the next five days the group formed bonds and friendships as they explored Disney World’s best attractions at Animal Kingdom, Hollywood Studios, and Magic Kingdom. Meals were shared each day including dinner at Medieval Times and a BBQ and pool party at Give Kids the World, the magical resort for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Special thanks to Arizona non-profit, For Those Without a Voice, for once again funding the airfare for all of the families to travel to Florida. Memories made during this indescribable week will no doubt be cherished by all.
In July, approximately 150 people gathered together at St. Louis Family Church for fun, games, and a delicious brunch courtesy of First Watch. The Make-A-Wish and Dream Factory families in attendance spanned sixteen years of the “We’re Going to Disney World!” trip hosted by the Warner Family and First Things First each summer. Families traveled to St. Louis from all over Missouri as well as Illinois and Iowa to be able to reconnect with the Warner family and each other.

First Things First and Operation Food Search were once again blown away by the support from greater St. Louis for the 17th annual Warners’ Warm-up Coat Drive with the donation of over 15,000 new or gently-used winter coats of all shapes and sizes for Bi-State residents in need. Brenda returned to St. Louis to kick off the drive at Operation Food Search with a donation of $20,000 worth of new coats that were sorted by students affiliated with Best Buddies, an organization dedicated to establishing a volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Because the coats are purchased in bulk, First Things First is able to obtain a significant discount, averaging approximately $15 per coat. The two-week drive, which takes place from November 1-14 each year, included more than 600 drop-off locations throughout the bi-state. As always, Operation Food Search distributed the coats through their network of social service agencies, homeless shelters, and social workers in schools. Special thanks to our Warners’ Warm-up teammates: FedEx Office, LookAfter Hair Company, A-Mrazek Moving Systems, USAgain, Mattress Firm, YMCA, KSDK, Joy FM, ESPN 101.1 and participating Starbucks, credit unions, and police stations.
First Things First once again partnered with Aaron’s, Inc. and U-Haul to surprise three Habitat for Humanity families with complete furnishings for their new homes. One family in St. Louis received their blessing for Independence Day and two families in the Phoenix area were surprised just in time for Christmas. Aaron’s generously donated all of the furniture, computer, and washer & dryer for each home. U-Haul provided in-kind and volunteer support while Brooklyn Bedding provided mattress sets for all eight beds in Arizona. Photos captured during each presentation tell the story of the families’ overwhelming joy and gratitude.

Initial Reaction

Touring the Homes

Family Photos
For the thirteenth consecutive year, the Warner family made their Christmas visit to Sunshine Acres Children’s Home in Mesa, AZ. Each child is given a personalized stocking with toys, books, games, and gift cards. The group enjoys a meal together and time playing a variety of games. This Warner family tradition has been a blessing for their family with the opportunity to form relationships with many of the kids who live long-term at Sunshine Acres. Following the 2017 visit, one of the house parents sent a note to First Things First sharing just how much those annual visits mean to one of the boys in her home. “He has seen so many people come and go in his life, but one thing has been constant, and even though it happens just once a year – he so very much looks forward to you coming each year. My heart is so full watching the influence you have on our little man.”

Mission: Possible!

Through the Mission: Possible! Scholarship program in 2017, First Things First was honored to support 42 groups of students participating in service-based mission trips across the US with a total of $34,500 in scholarships. The program began in 2005 with the hope of empowering youth to make a difference, strengthened faith for everyone involved, and the planting of seeds for continued service for Him in the years to come. So often when seeds are planted in the lives of people whose paths we briefly cross, we don’t have the opportunity to witness the future fruit. Through a 2017 application, First Things First was blessed to learn of the impact of Mission: Possible! on an advisor submitting an application. “I wrote an essay many years ago as a high school student and my home parish received a grant that allowed our small church to go on its first ever mission trip. I can never thank you enough for that experience as it is why I work in ministry now today.” All groups are encouraged to apply for spring break and summer mission trips by the respective deadlines of December 1 and April 1. Go to kurtwarner.org for more info.

Foundation of Faith in Iowa

First Things First continued its partnership with Cedar Valley Habitat for Humanity in Iowa with a $25,000 Foundation of Faith grant in 2017. Foundation of Faith encourages churches and other faith partners to join First Things First in funding and building homes for families in Cedar Rapids. The partnership has been encouraging with Habitat reporting “we have had dozens of new and returning volunteers on build sites, increased financial contributions and re-launched our Faith Relations committee.” These combined efforts are a real and lasting manifestation of God’s love in the lives of families in need.
Treasure House Update

Construction was in full swing this year at Treasure House Phoenix! It was so exciting to see the building come to life, and the years of planning finally take shape in a beautiful building. While the building was going up, the Treasure House team was busy continuing efforts for the capital campaign in order to raise needed funds. Desert Mountain High School hosted its third annual Wolves Walk for Treasure House in March. In May, Bert & Karen Hayenga opened their home for a special fundraiser under the stars. In June, the Valley came together for a day of fun, activities, and giving at West Valley Gives, held at the University of Phoenix Stadium. The Board of Directors welcomed two new members: Gary Todd and Rock Rickert. Treasure House also welcomed Coley Schaan-Amaro as the organization’s Director of Operations.

14th Annual Ultimate Football Experience

The fourteenth annual Ultimate Football Experience held March 10 & 11 in Phoenix, AZ featured weekend gridiron warriors competing on teams sponsored by the Arizona Cardinals, PetRays, Prosorce, U-Haul, and more. Participants took to the field at the Cardinals Training Facility with celebrities of the past, present and future for a 4-on-4 flag football tournament. The celebrity line-up included: David Carr, David Johnson, Brad Kaaya, Brock Osweiler, Dak Prescott, Mohamed Sanu, Jameis Winston, and of course Kurt Warner. PetRays quarterbacked by Dak Prescott took home the championship title, defeating Team UFE quarterbacked by the host himself, Kurt Warner. But the real winners are those served by FTF with approximately $130K raised! It was a team effort once again and First Things First would like to thank Training Table sponsors Carrabba’s Italian Grill, Crust, First Watch, and Wildflower Bread Company as well as other sponsors: TFO Phoenix, Veteran Tickets Foundation, Remo Tulliani Gear for Men, Brooklyn Bedding, Fast Action Sports, Royal Restrooms, Audi North Scottsdale, White Water, Rock It Up, Knockerball, Rural/Metro, Sub Zero Ice Cream, Coca-Cola, Nike, Hensley & Company, and Nest.

“Best experience of my life! I lived a childhood dream of being what felt like an NFL player for a day. I have pictures and experiences I will tell people about for years to come.”
Keeping up with the Warners for the Hall of Fame

First public introduction as a Hall of Famer at NFL Honors, just minutes after hearing the news.

Initial measurements were taken in Houston, but a follow-up visit was conducted in May to finalize the features of Kurt’s bust.

Enshrinement Festivities kicked off with a Cardinals/Cowboys game in Canton, OH.

As his presenter, Brenda had the honor of helping Kurt put on his gold jacket for the first time the night before the Enshrinement Ceremony.

200,000+ spectators take in the Grand Parade in Canton.

Kurt received his HoF ring at a Cardinals game in October.

Kurt’s speech at the Enshrinement Ceremony allowed him to give thanks and share special moments that shaped him.

Night With Champions - Hall of Fame Edition

Kurt and Brenda returned to St. Louis on November 28th for a Hall of Fame Edition of Night With Champions at The Pageant. This special night gave St. Louisans who were unable to celebrate with the Warners in person in Canton the chance to hear all about Induction Weekend and the Warners’ thoughts on this amazing honor. Fellow Class of 2017 Inductees Terrell Davis and Morten Andersen also joined. Prior to the onstage show, guests enjoyed food from Dewey’s Pizza, Fitz’s American Grill, Fuzzy’s Taco Shop, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Pappy’s Smokehouse, Spiro’s, and Tucanos Brazilian Grill and drinks courtesy of Urban Chestnut Brewing Company and LaChance Vineyards. It was a great night of stories, fun, and laughter and most importantly funds raised for the St. Louis outreach of First Things First.
Seven schools across the country participated in the CHEER (Consciousness Helps Encourage Equal Respect) program in 2017. Students “adopted” disabilities for a day and teachers incorporated curriculum on disability awareness to help students understand and appreciate everyone’s different abilities and disabilities. Kurt and Brenda visited Hopi Elementary in Phoenix at the end of their CHEER week to host an assembly to discuss the lessons learned through the program and how students can continue to apply those lessons in the future. Call 602-385-0840 to learn more about bringing the CHEER program to a school near you.