

THE UNITER



United Way of Central Florida

December 2023



Upcoming:

Dec. 21
YLS Holiday Dinner

Jan. 11
Tocqueville &
Démocratie Toast
Invitation Only

Feb. 10
Brunch in a Box

Feb. 22
Bayou Bash
Invitation Only

Feb. 29
Highlands County
Bayou Bash
Invitation Only

United Way creates opportunities for those in need! Our vision is to unite our community and empower everyone to achieve their full potential. We can only do that with through collective power of *you*. The gift of your time and donations give more opportunities to everyone in our community. *You* are the hero in this story and we thank you for creating those opportunities with us.

We are #UnitedInPurpose! [Give Today](#) before 2023 ends.

> News

Ileana Kniss on Spectrum News 13



Lakeland Mayor Bill Mutz, Captain Ken Chapman from Salvation Army Orlando and Ileana Kniss, Chief Development and Marketing Officer of United Way of Central Florida discuss charitable giving during the holidays with Spectrum News 13.

[Check out the Feature](#)

Women United Book Project



This month 12 Women United volunteers bundled 3,423 books for ReadingPals participants! These books are distributed to the 489 children in the program to help build their personal library and encourage reading throughout the winter break.

[Learn More about ReadingPals](#)

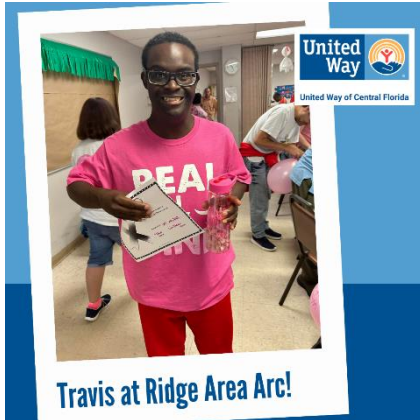
UWCF Connects with United Way Suncoast



This month several staff from United Way of Central Florida visited the office of United Way Suncoast to talk best practices and learn from one another. United Way Suncoast serves Hillsborough, Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota and Desoto counties. The time was insightful and informative for staff, uniting us for the communities we serve.

> Hardee & Highlands News

Partner Agency Success Story: Travis



After moving to Highlands County with his mother, Travis was connected with [Ridge Area Arc](#) and their residential services program for adults with developmental disabilities. He moved into one of the group homes where he could learn new skills in a safe environment. The program helps foster independence and teaches clients how to advocate for themselves. Travis's mom shared that his verbal and social skills improved shortly after he joined the program.

We're celebrating Travis' success with him! It's great to see individuals flourishing in our partner agency programs!

Highlands County Facebook Group



Since Highlands County is unique in that every dollar raised there stays there, our Highlands County Advisory Board asked for more opportunities for Highlands County features on social media. A Facebook Group was created specifically to highlight, share and discuss United Way in the heartland community.

If you're located in Highlands County, we encourage you to join the group!

[Facebook Group](#)

Hardee Holidayze



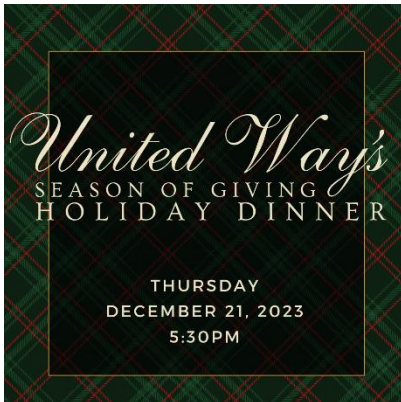
It was great to participate at Hardee Holiday: Santa's Workshop at the Wauchula Train Depot!

United Way of Central Florida hosted a craft table with community resource information, and the Success By 6 program gifted six books to be given out by Mrs. Claus to all children in attendance.

[Discover Success By 6](#)

> Get Involved

YLS Season of Giving Dinner



We're almost sold out! Don't miss out on this year's Season of Giving Holiday Dinner on December 21! Ticket sales close on Dec 14. This event is a fundraiser for the End Hunger initiative.

Can't make it? You can still contribute to the event's cause by donating and helping us feed more families in our community! Sponsorships are available.

[Register / Donate](#)

Volunteer Opportunity: Food Distribution



This time of year is especially busy for our 21 healthy food pantries. If you'd like to volunteer, we'd love to have you join a food distribution site!

Food distribution at these sites happen are available throughout the month in Polk, Hardee and Highlands County.

[Volunteer Opportunities](#)

ReadingPals Needed



We still need ReadingPals volunteers for this school year! The following schools especially need volunteers with students on the wait-list:

- Alta Vista Elementary (Haines City)
- Elbert Elementary (Haines City)
- Lake Shipp Elementary (Winter Haven)
- Lewis Elementary (Ft. Meade)
- Padgett Elementary (North Lakeland)
- Purcell Elementary (Mulberry)
- Willow Oak Elementary (Mulberry)

ReadingPals are volunteers that spend one hour each week in Kindergarten classrooms throughout Polk County, helping students read. Interested in joining us? We would love to have you be a part of this program. Sign up [here](#).

[ReadingPals Details](#)

[> Find Help](#)

George W. Jenkins End Hunger Initiative



In need of food? Locate one of our healthy food distribution sites. With 21 locations around Polk, Highlands and Hardee counties, UWCF is helping to supply families with boxes of frozen meat, fresh produce and dry goods at no cost!

We're looking for sponsors for Highlands and Hardee counties! If interested, contact Rod Crowley at rod.crowley@uwcf.org or 863.648-1500, EXT 275.

[Find Your Nearest Healthy Food Pantry](#)

2-1-1 Get Connected. Get Help.



United Way's 211 is the most comprehensive source of human and social services information in the country. Our teams of compassionate, highly trained specialists are available 24/7 to connect you with the best services available in Polk, Hardee and Highlands counties.

[Find Help Now](#)

[VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES](#)

[LOCAL
RESOURCES](#)

[MAKE A
DONATION](#)

Our mission is to inspire our community to give, advocate and volunteer by identifying needs and mobilizing vetted resources to create positive, local change.



UWCF MISSION PARTNERS:



The George Jenkins
— Foundation —