



Heart of Florida United Way and Center for Independent Living - Learning the Language and Moving Ahead

Imagine moving to a new country where your daily survival depends on learning a new language you cannot hear. That was the seemingly impossible task facing two hearing-impaired students who were determined to master English and become successful U.S. citizens.

To achieve their goal, Bill and Michael*, turned to the Center for Independent Living in Central Florida, Inc., a United Way supported agency that provides training, education and other services for disabled adults.

While attending Seminole Community College to improve their math and literacy skills, both students met weekly with agency education specialist.

With her help, Bill quickly mastered English and American Sign Language skills and passed his citizenship test with flying colors.

Michael worked with the specialist for more than six months to learn English-language driver's education materials. When it came time to take the written test for his learner's permit, he easily passed the test and successfully completed the driving a short time later.

To express his gratitude, Michael became an agency volunteer, using what he learned to help other deaf, Spanish-speaking clients learn to drive. He's also attending weekly classes to prepare for his citizenship test.

Impressed with pair's achievement and determination, agency staff point to Bill and Michael as examples of what can be achieved with the support of a caring, generous community.

* To protect the clients' identities, different names have been used.

By supporting Heart of Florida United Way, you help fund nearly 100 local agencies such as the Center for Independent Living, whose programs are making a critical difference in people's lives. You also become part of United Way's work to prevent critical problems by focusing on four key areas: Building Safe Communities; Improving Financial Stability; Developing Healthy Children and Families; and Alleviating Hunger and Homelessness.