



NEWS

Heart of Florida United Way

Dr. Nelson Ying Center • 1940 Traylor Boulevard • Orlando, FL 32804

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Aim to Reduce Summer Reading Loss through United Way's Day of Action

More than 25,000 Books Distributed to 2,300 Children throughout Tri-County Area

ORLANDO, Fla. (June 24, 2015) – By the end of fifth grade, low-income children are approximately 2.5 years behind their peers in terms of reading ability – primarily because of summer reading loss, which is the gradual decline of reading proficiency while children are away from the classroom. [Heart of Florida United Way's](#) seventh annual Day of Action – a community-wide, one-day volunteer event – recently helped to change this.

Hundreds of community members dedicated their time to participate in literacy projects throughout Central Florida and to distribute donated books. According to United Way, this year's event impacted more than 2,300 children at 25 United Way partner agencies, including Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida, Orlando Day Nursery, and Schools and Communities: Together for Tomorrow.

To encourage reading and foster literacy in young people, volunteers engaged in a variety of activities, including reading aloud, and playing word scramble and spelling games. Additionally, each child received at least six free books from the more than 25,000 collected prior to the event. Research shows that reading four books over the summer months can maintain or possibly increase a child's reading level.

"Thanks to the individuals and businesses who donated, we distributed more books this year than ever before," said Traci Blue, director of Heart of Florida United Way's Volunteer Resource Center. "This event will help us continue to address the issue of literacy and impact the lives of children in our area."

With price being the No. 1 barrier to book ownership, children from low-income families don't have sufficient access to age-appropriate books. In fact, studies show that in middle-income neighborhoods, the ratio of age-appropriate books is 13 books for every child, while in low-income neighborhoods, it is one book for every 300 children.

"At Heart of Florida United Way, we know that education is the key to ensuring that our young people have the tools they need to succeed," said Robert H. (Bob) Brown, president and CEO of Heart of Florida United Way. "Through initiatives like Day of Action, we are continuing to invest in results and in the future of our community."

To learn more about addressing summer reading loss, visit http://hfuw.org/Day_of_Action.php.

About Heart of Florida United Way

Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) is Central Florida's most comprehensive health and human services charity and the largest provider of funds to the region's most critical health and human service programs. Last year, it raised and managed \$26.6 million throughout Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. HFUW is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income, health and basic needs. It operates United Way 2-1-1, Central Florida's crisis, suicide and referral helpline; Volunteer Resource Center; Gifts In Kind Center; Emergency Homelessness Services; and the Ryan White Part B program, which administers more than \$2 million to provide HIV/AIDS services and



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referrals. HFUW impacts more than 400,000 individuals annually through its direct services and funded programs. United Way partners with local businesses, government and other charities to increase awareness of local health and human service issues and to inspire hope, provide options and create possibilities for people in need. Visit www.HFUW.org for more information, or call (407) 835-0900.