



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Heart of Florida United Way Hosts 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Community Volunteer Excellence Awards** *Ceremony Honors Those Who Make a Difference in Central Florida*

**ORLANDO, Fla. (July 15, 2015)** – [Heart of Florida United Way](#) presented 11 awards at its second annual Community Volunteer Excellence Awards on July 14 at the Rosen Centre Hotel.

The event, emceed by *Orlando Sentinel* columnist Scott Maxwell and sponsored by 4R Restaurant Group, recognized contributions that impact nonprofit, government, faith-based and educational organizations across Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties. Guests enjoyed a special performance from SAK Comedy Lab after the ceremony.

An independent panel selected winners from 167 nominations submitted by more than 50 organizations.

“We are so excited that this year’s event had more than double the number of last year’s nominations,” said Traci Blue, director of the Volunteer Resource Center at Heart of Florida United Way. “As this event continues to grow, it is our hope that the recognitions inspire more people to seek out volunteer opportunities and make a difference.”

The following volunteers also received awards:

- **Above & Beyond Award (individual):** Steve Kirby, nominated by Orlando Day Nursery
- **Above & Beyond Award (company):** Toptech Systems, nominated by Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida
- **Outstanding National Service Volunteer:** CaSandra Williams, nominated by Heart of Florida United Way
- **Outstanding Corporate Group:** Adventist University, nominated by the Community Food & Outreach Center
- **Outstanding Faith/Student/Civic Group:** Volunteer UCF, nominated by a UCF staff member
- **Outstanding Professional Volunteers:** Dr. Raza Ali, nominated by Shepherd’s Hope, and Lincoln Salmon, nominated by Harbor House of Central Florida
- **Outstanding Individual Volunteer:** Patrick Murdock, nominated by Community Food & Outreach Center
- **Outstanding Volunteer Manager:** Mark Perez, nominated by Community Food & Outreach Center
- **Outstanding Youth Volunteer:** Jay Ryon, Jr., nominated by Easter Seals Florida Challenge

Ed Timberlake was presented with Volunteer Florida's Champion of Service Lifelong Achievement Award by Sherry Wheelock, commissioner of Volunteer Florida. The award honors those who have demonstrated significant dedication to making a difference in their communities by volunteering and providing leadership over the course of their life.

Heart of Florida United Way presented special recognitions to Katie Kochan and Jessica Schwendeman.

For more information about Heart of Florida United Way, or to find local volunteer opportunities, visit [www.hfuw.org](http://www.hfuw.org).

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#### **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 referrals. HFUW impacts more than 400,000 individuals annually through its direct service and funded programs. United Way partners with local businesses, government, 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](http://www.HFUW.org) for more information, or call (407) 835-0900.*

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