



# NEWS

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Heart of Florida United Way Partners with Help Me Grow Florida** *Initiative Helps Parents Detect Early Developmental Issues in Children*

**ORLANDO, Fla. (Jan. 15, 2016)** – Bibi Brown knew her son had developmental issues early on in his childhood. After being called “paranoid” and turned away by her son’s primary pediatrician on several occasions, she called Heart of Florida United Way’s 2-1-1 call center for continual emotional support. Despite the skeptics, Brown was persistent and kept advocating for her son. Eventually, he was appropriately diagnosed as autistic. Because Brown had been so determined to help her son’s development, he was able to begin early intervention therapy, helping him learn appropriate behaviors and skills for his age.

There are thousands of families in Florida like Brown’s who have children with potential developmental delays. Brown’s story highlights the need for an exciting new resource for Floridians called Help Me Grow.

Help Me Grow Florida is a statewide system designed to address the need for early identification of developmental and/or behavioral concerns, and then link children and families to the necessary services and support. The organization’s ultimate goal is to promote healthy development for every child in Florida, regardless of circumstances.

With United Way’s focus on health and prevention versus intervention, Help Me Grow is a natural fit as a new partner. Now, for parents with concerns similar to those Brown had for her son, support and resources are just a phone call away.

“Partnering with Help Me Grow Florida, we can further assist parents who call our 2-1-1 Information and Assistance Helpline looking for answers to concerns that are very close to the heart,” said Robert H. (Bob) Brown, president and CEO of Heart of Florida United Way. “This is an opportunity for us to help families in a whole new way.”

Brown was so grateful for the support she received through 2-1-1 that she is now the program manager with the newly added Help Me Grow Florida program.

“It’s incredibly rewarding to help other parents understand and cope with a reality I once had to face alone,” said Brown. “I’m excited to see how our new partnership with Help Me Grow makes a difference.”

For more information, please visit [www.hfuw.org](http://www.hfuw.org) or [www.helpmegrowfl.org](http://www.helpmegrowfl.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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