FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Heart of Florida United Way Hosts Open House to Celebrate 211 Day
February 11 (2-11) Acknowledges Crisis Line That Serves 250,000 Each Year

ORLANDO, FL (February 11, 2020) – To celebrate National 211 Day, Heart of Florida United Way hosted an open house for community leaders and local officials to get an inside look at the 211 Information & Referral Crisis Line’s operations. On average, 211 responds to 22,000 calls and electronic contacts monthly.

United Way’s 211 is dedicated to serving ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) by connecting hardworking individuals and families that struggle to cover their basic needs with local organizations that provide critical health and human services. In servicing the ALICE population, Heart of Florida United Way’s 211 is positioned to be able to predict social service needs and trends.

“211 tends to be a predictor of social service needs,” said Jeff Hayward, President and CEO, Heart of Florida United Way. “During the 2008 housing crisis, 211 foresaw the weakened housing market,” he continued. “Currently, most 211 requests are related to affordable housing and rental assistance. The community is fortunate to have 211 assist with connecting individuals to local resources, and it is our goal to meet their needs.”

As ALICE is only one emergency away from financial ruin, 211 continues to serve as a life-line for families that encounter unexpected expenses that can cause them to face the threat of homelessness and other crises.

All 211 Specialists are highly trained to respond to crises, including suicide. 211 Specialists receive over 80 hours of training and follow the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) model recommended by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Many of Heart of Florida United Way’s 211 Specialists are bilingual in English - Spanish and also have 24/7 access to professional translators through a telephonic interpreter service to ensure accessibility for all languages.

Heart of Florida United Way’s 211 is a part of the National 211 Network of approximately 240 call centers covering 95 percent of the U.S., with 13 centers in Florida. HFUW’s 211 serves as the crisis support helpline for 42 counties in Central Tennessee.

211 can be reached via phone by simply dialing 211, through texting a zip code to 898-211, or by email, chat, and online database at www.HFUW.org/GetHelp. Services are free, confidential and available 24/7.

211 Specialists connects individuals with local organizations that provide vital services such as:
To learn more about 211, 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 $24.4 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 information and assistance, 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 650,000 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.