



# NEWS

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Heart of Florida United Way

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Heart of Florida United Way Awarded Helios Education Foundation Grant to Advance Postsecondary Student Success in Orange and Osceola Counties

*\$750,000 Grant Fuels 3-Year Initiative for Florida Student Postsecondary Achievement*

**ORLANDO, Fla. (June 2, 2025)** – Today, Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) proudly announces it has received a significant grant from Helios Education Foundation, selected through a recent Request for Proposals (RFP) dedicated to advancing postsecondary success for Florida students.

With this funding, Heart of Florida United Way will establish the **Education United: Student Success HUB** through **upliftED**, Central Florida's Local College Access Network. This initiative aims to dismantle financial and systemic barriers to higher education, ultimately boosting **FAFSA completion, college enrollment, and student persistence** in Orange and Osceola counties.

Based on [Helios Florida's Future Billions report](#), increasing college enrollment by just 10% in Central Florida could potentially generate an annual fiscal benefit of about \$398 million and a social benefit of about \$945 million.

The upliftED Student Success HUB will serve as a vital resource, guiding students through the complexities of college. It will offer **FAFSA completion assistance, essay and application workshops, provide cost-of-college guidance, and deliver one-on-one advising** to ensure students have the support they need to successfully transition from home and high school to college and independent living. Additionally, this partnership with Helios Education Foundation will expand the successful **Destination Graduation** program started at Seminole State College of Florida to Valencia College, offering **emergency financial assistance** to help students overcome unexpected hardships, remain enrolled, and successfully graduate.

Heart of Florida United Way is one of five Florida organizations selected to receive Helios funding through the Florida Student Postsecondary Success Request for Proposals (RFP).

“We are honored to partner with Helios Education Foundation on this critical work,” said [Jeff Hayward](#), Heart of Florida United Way CEO. “Throughout the years, we have worked closely with our partners to create meaningful tools and resources for students of all ages and now the

partnership with Helios Education Foundation means upliftED can also provide direct support to students and their families through the innovative Student Success HUB.”

“We’re proud to support Heart of Florida United Way as they work to advance educational success across Central Florida,” said [Paul J. Luna](#), President and CEO of Helios Education Foundation. “They are on the frontlines of change—removing barriers to postsecondary achievement and creating new opportunities for students to thrive. We’re excited to partner on this important work.”

For more information about upliftED, visit [www.upliftedcf.org](http://www.upliftedcf.org). For more information on how Heart of Florida United Way is expanding access to education in Central Florida, visit [www.hfuw.org/our-impact/education](http://www.hfuw.org/our-impact/education).

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### About upliftED

*UpliftED is a dynamic network of nearly 50 community partners dedicated to increasing the number of Central Floridians with a college degree or high-quality credential, ultimately enhancing their access to livable wages. As Central Florida's Local College Access Network, they align and coordinate collective efforts across education, business, government, industry, and nonprofit sectors to build a skilled workforce and strong economy by increasing college degrees and high-quality credentials.*

### About Heart of Florida United Way

*Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) stands up for the education, financial stability, health and basic needs of every person in Central Florida. For 85 years, HFUW has delivered programs, invested dollars, and convened community members around important issues impacting Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties. As Central Florida's most comprehensive health and human services nonprofit, HFUW created a \$50 million impact in Central Florida last year. In 2022-23, HFUW served more than 755,000 people through its direct service and funded programs — that is one in every three Central Floridians. HFUW is home to notable community resources like the 211 Information & Referral Crisis Line; 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline; Mission United program for Veterans; TECHquity<sup>(OBI)</sup> [<sup>\(OBI\)</sup>www.HFUW.org](http://www.HFUW.org) for more information, or call (407) 835-0900. Follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn at Heart of Florida United Way and on Twitter and Instagram @hfuw.*

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