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From Classroom to Career: Heart of Florida United Way Connects 300 Seminole County Middle School Students to STEAM Careers

ORLANDO, Fla. (May 21, 2026) — Heart of Florida United Way hosted 300 Seminole County middle schoolers for its second annual – and the county’s inaugural – Future United STEAM Day on Thursday, May 21, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The event brought students to the Seminole State College of Florida Sanford/Lake Mary Campus for interactive workshops highlighting career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM) and introduced them to the college experience.

Throughout the day, students rotated through hands-on activities and live demonstrations to learn about real-world careers, emerging industries, latest innovations in technology, and workforce skills. A collaborative effort with community leaders in healthcare, technology, and education, Future United STEAM Day is designed to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the rapidly evolving digital economy.

“At Heart of Florida United Way, Future United STEAM Day is about helping students see what is possible for their future,” said Kelly Astro, senior vice president of community impact, Heart of Florida United Way. “We want students to experience firsthand how science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics connect to exciting, real-world careers, while also helping them understand the educational pathways that can lead them there. For many of these students, this will be their first time stepping onto a college campus, and our hope is that the experience sparks curiosity, builds confidence, and helps them begin to see themselves as the future innovators, creators, and workforce leaders of Central Florida.”

Students from Greenwood Lakes Middle School, Jackson Heights Middle School, Markham Woods Middle School, Millennium Middle School, Teague Middle School, and Tuskawilla Middle School engaged directly with industry professionals to learn about career pathways. This year’s partners include:

Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA), Innovation Station, Orlando Health, Orlando Math Circle, Randall Construction, Seminole County Government Fire, Seminole County Government Watershed Management, Seminole County Government/Landfill and Water Management, Seminole State College of Florida, and Smart City.

The Future United STEAM Day is an extension of Heart of Florida’s United Way’s Digital Horizons initiative, which focuses on preparing the community for an increasingly technologically-driven workforce. Last year’s inaugural event was held at Valencia College’s

West Campus, and 250 students from Orange County middle schools participated. Heart of Florida United Way plans to host its first FUSD event for Osceola County middle school students and the second annual event for Orange County middle school students in the fall of 2026.

About Heart of Florida United Way

Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) stands for the education, financial stability, health and basic needs of every person in Central Florida. Since 1939, HFUW has delivered programs, invested dollars, and convened community members around important issues impacting Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties. In 2024-25, HFUW served 1 in 4 people in Central Florida through its direct service and funded programs. HFUW is home to notable community resources like the 211 Information & Referral Line; 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline; Mission United program for Veterans; Digital Horizons, an initiative bridging the digital divide; Destination Graduation at Seminole State College; upliftED, a cross-sector coalition of community leaders working to help make education after high school more accessible and affordable; the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, where IRS-verified volunteers help qualified families in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties electronically file basic income tax returns at convenient times and locations throughout tax season; the Planning Council Support program that facilitates community planning and priority setting for HIV services. United Way partners with individuals, local businesses, government, and other nonprofit agencies to open opportunities and close gaps in Central Florida. Visit 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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