



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Beth Long | blong@tsic.org | 786-369-5145

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TAKE STOCK IN CHILDREN NAMES HEART OF FLORIDA UNITED WAY AS NEW ORANGE COUNTY PROGRAM PARTNER

Strategic partnership aligns Take Stock in Children's proven mentoring, college preparation, and scholarship model with Heart of Florida United Way's regional network to expand opportunities for low-income students in grades 6-12

ORLANDO, Fla. — Take Stock in Children, a statewide nonprofit providing mentoring, college readiness support, and scholarships to low-income students, has partnered with Heart of Florida United Way to lead the Take Stock in Children program serving Orange County. Effective Aug. 1, 2026, Heart of Florida United Way assumed management of the local program, uniting two of Central Florida's leading organizations committed to social mobility, youth advocacy, and educational access.

Supported through an investment from Helios Education Foundation, the transition establishes a framework designed to reduce barriers to higher education for low-income, motivated students in grades 6-12. By integrating Take Stock's multi-year program model, which combines volunteer mentoring, college preparation services and guaranteed college scholarships upon program completion, into Heart of Florida United Way's regional infrastructure, corporate network and family resource matrix, the partnership will provide wraparound support to hundreds of local students.

"This is an intentional, highly strategic step forward for the youth of Orange County," said Bethany Lacey, CEO of Take Stock in Children. "Our core promise to our students, mentors, and families remains completely ironclad. By partnering with Heart of Florida United Way, we are elevating our localized support engine to ensure that our students have a deeply sustainable, holistic pathway to move from middle and high school graduation into postsecondary completion and thriving careers."

"We are incredibly proud to welcome Take Stock in Children of Orange County into the Heart of Florida United Way family," stated Jeff Hayward, President and CEO of Heart of Florida United Way. "Education is a primary catalyst for breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Integrating Take Stock's life-changing mentoring networks into our existing

infrastructure allows us to supercharge our collective focus on student success, workforce readiness, and community vitality. Together, we are ensuring that every motivated student, regardless of their socioeconomic background, has the long-term village necessary to thrive."

Under the terms of the new partnership, all current Take Stock in Children of Orange County student contracts, scholarship funds, and volunteer mentor pairings will transition seamlessly with no disruption to programming. The local program team will continue working closely with local schools and communities to ensure targeted academic interventions remain in place.

To learn more about Take Stock in Children and its programs across Florida, visit www.takestockinchildren.org.

To learn more about Heart of Florida United Way and its community programs across Central Florida, visit www.HFUW.org.

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About Take Stock in Children

Since 1995, Take Stock in Children, a Florida 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, has helped to break the cycle of poverty for over 46,000 of Florida's low-income, at-risk youth by providing scholarships, mentors, and hope. Through 45 local programs, Take Stock in Children consistently achieves high school graduation rates that exceed the state average. Take Stock in Children is Florida's flagship and most successful mentoring and scholarship program. To donate, volunteer, or learn about Take Stock in Children, please visit www.takestockinchildren.org.

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; upliftED, a college-access and career-readiness coalition; Digital Horizons, an initiative bridging the digital divide; Digital Horizons, an initiative bridging the digital divide; Destination Graduation at Seminole State College; 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.