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MEDIA ALERT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Behind the Desk to Behind the Scenes: Heart of Florida United Way Connects 200+ Middle Schoolers to Careers in STEAM

ORLANDO, Fla. (October 30, 2026) – Heart of Florida United Way successfully held its second Future United STEAM Day (FUSD) for Orange County middle school students on Friday, October 30, 2026, at Valencia College West Campus. The event brought together more than 200 middle school students from across the county for an immersive, hands-on exploration of career pathways in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM).

Designed to spark early career curiosity, the event offered students interactive demonstrations and hands-on experiences that connected classroom concepts to real work. This bridge between coursework and the real world showed students how their studies lay the foundation for interesting and exciting careers.

Throughout the day students participated in interactive STEAM activities exploring potential futures as innovators, creators, and healthcare professionals. Across dynamic, hands-on stations, participants tried their hand at CPR, tested out microchip technology, worked with professional film gear and discovered how airports manage air traffic.

“Showing students what careers and job opportunities are possible starts at a young age,” said Kelly Astro, senior vice president, Heart of Florida United Way. “The goal of today is to help these middle school students see that what they’re learning in school today can be the foundation for an exciting future in something they are passionate about. Events like this spark inspiration that can last a lifetime.”

The event was made possible through strong collaboration with local educational leaders, businesses, and community organizations dedicated to building Central Florida's future workforce. Partners this year included:

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- Orlando Health
- Innovation Station
- Greater Orlando Aviation Authority
- OEP – Florida Semiconductor Institute
- Randall Construction
- Patenta Pending
- Universal Technical Institute (UTI)
- Valencia College – Campus Tours

“We’re so excited for this opportunity to bring hands-on CPR and Stop the Bleed training to students in Osceola County,” said Sheryl Aldarondo, BSN, RN, Trauma and Burn Injury Prevention Coordinator at Orlando Health ORMC. “Not only are students learning life-saving first aid skills, they may also discover a newfound passion for medicine and start investigating a career in healthcare. We are thrilled to be a part of that journey.”

About Heart of Florida United Way

Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) helps individuals and families in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties overcome life’s challenges by providing the support they need to meet basic needs, achieve financial stability, and reach education goals. Since 1939, HFUW has united donors, volunteers, businesses, government, and nonprofit partners—helping light the way to a strong foundation for resilience, dignity, and a brighter future across Central Florida. During our 2025–2026 fiscal year, HFUW served more than 470,000 individuals across Central Florida through signature initiatives including 211 and 988, providing 24/7 information, referrals, and crisis support; VITA and Bank On, helping households build financial stability; and Community Schools, Help Me Grow, Destination Graduation, upliftED, Take Stock in Children, and Digital Horizons, expanding educational achievement and workforce readiness. HFUW also brings the community together through beloved annual initiatives such as the Thanksgiving Project, which helps provide holiday meals to families in need, and the Community Baby Shower, which equips expectant and new parents with essential resources and support. In 2026, HFUW introduced the United Learning Lab, which delivers technology, education, and essential support services directly into Central Florida neighborhoods. Together with community partners, HFUW is creating pathways to opportunity and ensuring every person has the resources to thrive. For more information, visit www.HFUW.org, call (407) 835-0900, or follow Heart of Florida United Way on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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