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MEDIA ALERT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecting Osceola County Middle Schoolers to STEAM: Heart of Florida United Way Expands "Behind-the-Scenes" Program to Osceola County

KISSIMMEE, Fla. (October 23, 2026) – Heart of Florida United Way successfully held its first Future United STEAM Day (FUSD) for Osceola County middle school students on Friday, October 23, 2026, at NeoCity Osceola. The event brought together seventh-grade students from across the county for an immersive, hands-on exploration of career pathways in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). This is the first year Heart of Florida United Way has brought the program to Osceola County middle schools.

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.

A $25,000 grant from the Florida Lottery Bright Futures makes these high-impact Future United STEAM Days possible across Central Florida. Following a successful event earlier this year in Seminole County, the series heads to Osceola and Orange counties later this month to inspire the next generation of innovators.

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 young people what is possible starts long before they enter the workforce," said Kelly Astro, senior vice president, Heart of Florida United Way. "When we give students the opportunity to see careers they may never have imagined for themselves,

we are doing more than inspiring them. We are helping them connect what they are learning today to the possibilities of tomorrow. When we help young people discover what they are capable of, we are not only investing in their future. We are investing in the future of Central Florida and the strength of our entire community."

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

- Adrenaline Media
- CAIIRE
- Greater Orlando Aviation Authority
- Innovation Station
- NeoCity Academy
- OEP - Florida Semi-Conductor Institute
- Orlando Health
- Randall Construction
- Sheyna Patel

"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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