

THE UNITER



On June 26, UWCF received the Excellence in Volunteerism Award from Volunteer Florida. This prestigious statewide honor recognizes UWCF's exceptional leadership and dedication to supporting the community during times of crisis. Congratulations to the entire team for making a meaningful impact across Central Florida.

Save the Date

August 14

[Campaign Kick-Off](#)

September 4

[Highlands County
Campaign Kick-Off](#)

October 14

**Women United Party
with a Purpose**

November 6

LGA Celebration



News

Thank You to Our Retiring Board Members



We extend our sincere gratitude to the following board members for their dedicated service and leadership:

- Joe Tedder
- Michael Tamney
- Scott Sjoblom
- Sam Killebrew
- Joe Gleason
- Lauren Giordano
- Tip Fowler
- Ali Wright

Your contributions have made a lasting impact.

UWCF Receives State Funding



UWCF has been awarded \$250,000 in state funding to support a new program, “Thrive Together: End Hunger & Wellness Navigation.”

This funding will enable us to deliver essential resources to Highlands and Hardee counties, expanding the services already available and allowing us to reach even more of our neighbors in need.

Special thanks go to Senate President [Ben Albritton](#), Senator [Colleen Burton](#), and Representatives Jon Albert, Jennifer Houghton Canady, Jennifer Kincart Jonsson, Josie Tomkow, and Kaylee Tuck for championing this initiative and warmly welcoming our team during legislative visits.

[Read More](#)

Ashley Bell Barnett Appointed to Women United Global Leadership Council



We're proud to share that Ashley Bell Barnett, Past Board Chair of UWCF, has been appointed to the Women United Global Leadership Council. Ashley's dedication to strengthening families and communities across Polk, Hardee, and Highlands counties remains an inspiration. Her new role reflects her deep commitment to United Way's mission and the global impact of Women United.

[Read More](#)

Ruth Teets Honored by Florida Children's Movement



Congratulations to ReadingPals Program Manager Ruth Teets for being honored by the Florida Children's Movement as the ReadingPals Coordinator of the Year! Her unwavering dedication to improving outcomes for young children and families shines through in all she does. We're proud to see her outstanding work recognized at the state level.

Thank You Read-A-Thon Participants



The Success By 6 Summer Read-A-Thon is complete, and our community's young readers logged an incredible 3,706 books in just one month! As we celebrate 30 years of Success By 6, founded by Carol Jenkins Barnett, we're grateful to the more than 550 participants who helped bring essential learning resources to children across Central Florida—and inspired a love of reading all summer long.

[Learn More About Success By 6](#)

UWCF Awarded Grant from American Red Cross



UWCF has been awarded over \$125,000 from the American Red Cross to strengthen community recovery and resilience in areas impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. This funding will allow UWCF to expand infrastructure and resources that support long-term regional resilience.

Hardee & Highlands News

AdventHealth Supports Lake Placid Food Pantry



UWCF has partnered with AdventHealth to expand our efforts to fight food insecurity in Highlands County. At our June 26 kickoff event in Lake Placid, hundreds of families received nutritious food through our End Hunger Initiative. This partnership strengthens our mission to build a healthier, more resilient Heartland.

[Read More](#)

Get Involved

ReadingPals Needs Volunteers



ReadingPals are volunteers that spend one hour each week in kindergarten classrooms throughout Polk County, helping students read. We need volunteers for the upcoming school year!

Interested in joining us? We would love to have you be a part of this program.

[Learn more.](#)

[Sign Up!](#)

Join Us for Campaign Kick-Off



Join us Thursday, August 14, at 3:30 p.m. for our 2025-2026 Campaign Kick-Off!

Campaign Co-Chairs Greg Littleton and Weymon Snuggs will host trivia with fun prizes at the Bartow Civic Center. An exciting presentation of what's to come this campaign year will be given. Refreshments will be provided.

[RSVP](#)

Highlands County Campaign Kick-Off



Save the date for our Highlands County Campaign Kick-Off on Thursday, September 4 at 5:30 p.m., hosted by Alexis de Tocqueville Society member Alan Jay Wildstein!

Hors d'oeuvres, drinks and valet parking provided.

[RSVP](#)

Find Help

George W. Jenkins End Hunger Initiative



Are you struggling to put food on the table? With 21 healthy food pantry sites around Polk and Highlands counties, UWCF is helping to supply families with boxes of frozen meat, fresh produce and dry goods at no cost!

[Find Your Nearest Healthy Food Pantry](#)

Thank you to our Polk County Food Pantry Sponsor, The George Jenkins Foundation and our Highlands County Food Pantry Sponsor, AdventHealth.

211 Get Connected. Get Help.



United Way's 211 is the most comprehensive source of human and social services information in the country. Our teams of compassionate, highly trained specialists are available 24/7 to connect you with the best services available in Polk, Hardee and Highlands counties.

[Find Help Now](#)

[MAKE A DONATION](#)

[LOCAL RESOURCES](#)

[VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES](#)

Our mission is to inspire our community to give, advocate and volunteer by identifying needs and mobilizing vetted resources to create positive, local change.



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