

THE UNITED



Tax preparation is now underway across Polk, Hardee, and Highlands counties through our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, offering free and reliable support to local families.

Save the Date

March 3

YLS Drop-In Social

March 20

YLS Lunch & Learn

March 28

Women United Garden Party

This year marks our second year partnering with Florida Southern College, as Accounting students volunteer throughout the season, gaining valuable hands-on experience while giving back to the community.

[Find a Location Near You!](#)

April 11
**Highlands
County
Women
United
Spring
Soirée**

April 23
**Highlands
County
Day of
Caring**

May 14
**Annual
Celebratio
n**



United Way of Florida Capitol Days



Some of our team started the month with a productive few days in Tallahassee! We're grateful for the opportunity to spend time at the Capitol, meeting with our state legislators and advocating for the work we do in Polk, Hardee, and Highlands counties.



A special thank you to our colleagues at United Way of Florida, members of the United Way of Florida Board, Representative Jon Albert, Senator Colleen Burton, Representative Jennifer Canady, Representative Jennifer Kincart Jonsson, Representative Kaylee Tuck, Senator Grall, and Legislative Aides for Senator Ben Albritton for taking time out of their busy schedules to support our neighbors.





Women United Hosts Brunch in a Box



Women United hosted its annual Brunch in a Box event on Saturday, February 7. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors and community members who purchased brunch boxes, the event raised more than \$21,000 to benefit Success By 6 programming.

Success By 6 is a vital early childhood initiative that ensures children in our community are prepared to enter kindergarten with the



skills they need for lifelong success. The funds raised through Brunch in a Box will directly support high-quality early learning resources, parent education, and school readiness efforts across Central Florida.



Women United extends its heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed, attended, or supported the event. Your investment helps create brighter futures for our youngest learners and strengthens families throughout our community.

To join Women United, [click here](#) or email WU@uwcf.org.

United Way Celebrates National 211 Day



We were proud to celebrate 211 Day on February 11, recognizing the vital role 211 plays in connecting individuals and families to essential resources like housing, food, utilities assistance, mental health support, and more. As part of a network serving 99% of the U.S. population and available 24/7 in 180+ languages, 211 ensures that help is always just a call, text, or click away.



This year, Hardee County, Highlands County, and the City of Lakeland issued official proclamations honoring 211 Day and highlighting the service's impact across our region. Their support helps raise awareness of this critical community resource and strengthens our shared commitment to ensuring every resident can easily access the help they need, whenever they need it.



To be connected to resources, call 211, text your zip code to 898-211, or visit uwcf.org/211.

Community Wellness Program at Work



This week, Amanda Red attended the Life-Saving Community AED/CPR Training through Lakeland Regional Health. This opportunity is funded through a Community Wellness grant. Participants gained the skills and confidence to act quickly in a cardiac emergency, helping make our community safer and healthier.

UCRF Impact Update

Last fall, UWCF and GiveWell Community Foundation activated the United Community Relief Fund (UCRF) to respond to a temporary SNAP freeze that caused a surge in food insecurity across our community.

Thanks to UCRF, 28 partner agencies were able to meet increased needs, distributing hundreds of thousands of pounds of food, restocking shelves, expanding mobile and school pantries, and providing emergency financial aid. Across the region, thousands of households received hot meals, holiday food bags, hygiene supplies, and other essentials.

While the SNAP freeze was temporary, UCRF support brought stability, dignity, and hope to families facing hardship. Thank you to all who made this relief possible!

Hardee & Highlands News

Thank You to our Highlands County Bayou Bash Sponsors



Thank you to our Bayou Bash sponsors for their generous support. Because of you, we were able to host an incredible event while maximizing the dollars reinvested back into the Highlands County community. Every dollar raised locally stays local, supporting programs that help individuals and families across Highlands County.

Thank you to: Insight Auctioneers, LeaderOne Financial, Lakeside Dental Arts, Highlands Jewelers, Central Florida Property Management, Duke Energy – Sebring, Get Fish Slapped, Ridge Energy Savers, Seacoast Bank, South Florida State College, SouthState Bank, Berkshire Hathaway, Bullgator Plumbing, Crews Bank & Trust, Down and Dirty Cleaning Services, Glades Electric, Haynes Pest Control, Heartland Tax and Accounting, Longs AC, Turner Furniture, Sevigny & Associates Eye Care, SOS Septic and Sewer, Brooke Britt-State Farm Insurance, Copley & Hargaden PA, Florida Waste Solutions LLC, Taylor Oil, Scott Kirouac, 360 Irrigation and Landscaping LLC, HoundDawg Sauce, Costa Aggregates, and K&M Site Services.

To get involved, contact Shawn Beumel at Shawn.Beumel@uwcf.org.

United We Shine: School Spirit Showdown



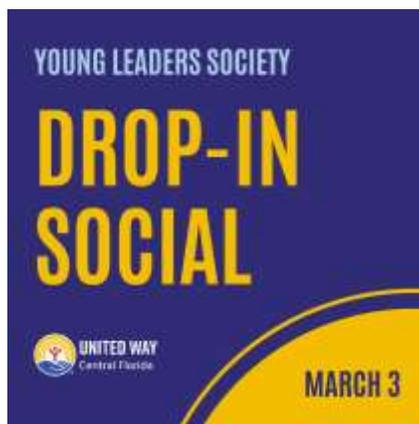
A big round of applause to Sun 'n Lake Elementary for raising over \$1,500 through the United We Shine fundraiser to support UWCF in Highlands County! Your school spirit and dedication made a real impact.

We also want to thank every school that participated. Together, the schools raised \$5,700 to support local programs that make a difference.

[Read the full article in the Highlands News Sun.](#)

Get Involved

YLS Drop-In Social in Bartow!



Join the United Way of Central Florida Young Leaders Society for a Drop-In Social!

March 3 | 5:30–7:00 p.m.

Front Page Brewing | Bartow

Connect with fellow young professionals, enjoy a casual evening, and learn more about YLS. Open to current and future members. No RSVP required.

ReadingPals Needs Volunteers



ReadingPals are volunteers who spend one hour each week in kindergarten classrooms throughout Polk County, helping students read.

Volunteers are still needed! Interested in joining us? We would love to have you be a part of this program. [Learn more.](#)

[Sign Up!](#)

Find Help

Free Tax Help Available Now



United Way of Central Florida is offering FREE tax preparation through the VITA program across Polk, Hardee, and Highlands counties. Our IRS-certified volunteers can help eligible households file accurately and maximize their refund.

Now – April 11, 2026

Sites throughout Polk, Hardee, and
Highlands counties

File your taxes accurately and for free
at [MyFreeTaxes.com](https://www.myfreetaxes.com) or find a site
near you via the link below!

[Find a Tax Site](#)

End Hunger Initiative



Are you struggling to put food on the table? With 20 healthy food pantry sites around Polk, Hardee, 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, our Highlands County Food Pantry Sponsor, AdventHealth and our Hardee County Food Pantry Sponsor, the State of Florida.

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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