

## Pacesetters prioritize community, lead by example

**By Jonathan Gabel**

As a small, family-owned local business, serving the community is a priority. Through United Way of Lee, Hendry, and Glades Counties, Priority Business Solutions is proud to give back as a Pacesetter Company, one of 172 businesses who “jump start” the local United Way campaign by raising the initial dollars and leading by example.

While there may not be enough hours in the day for full-time employees to give their time and talents directly, our collective giving through the United Way campaign gives us an easy, consistent way to give back. As a payroll and payments solution for businesses, Priority understands the power of United Way’s payroll deduction program and the ripple effect it has on our company and the greater community.

Every employee contributes a small portion of their paycheck, and I’m proud to say that Priority Business Solutions has achieved **100% participation**. As a business owner, that makes me very grateful and proud. It truly validates that we have good people who care for our community and are willing to give back, even if it’s just a few dollars a paycheck.

As a long-time volunteer for United Way, my history began when a friend recommended that I serve on the Allocations Committee. As volunteers, we represent a diverse group of business leaders and residents who meet with United Way agencies, and hopeful agencies, to assess and ensure fiscal and program accountability for United Way donors. This involves tours, interviews, and financial audits to make sure these organizations are making the best use of the dollars they receive.

Through this process, I have learned that United Way is involved in so many facets of our community and is truly the backbone of human and social services throughout the region. This gives me a first-hand look at the impact of the dollars raised in the community.

Take for example, Beesley’s Paw Prints, a United Way program that engages volunteers with registered therapy dogs to visit partner agencies such as the Children’s Advocacy Center where pets therapy help offers distraction and stress relief to children experiencing trauma. As a parent, I feel a connection to this program, and it brings me great joy to see smiles on the faces of children who are hurting.

Additionally, United Way’s 211 program is the first step for finding help, regardless of the situation. United Way is also often first to respond in the event of a disaster such as a hurricane or tornado.

One of the reasons that United Way is a top choice for employee giving is that all the funds they raise stay local. Many of us feel strongly that if we are going to donate our hard-earned dollars, we want the funds to stay in our community. I know that whether I give \$25 or \$2,500, the dollars are going directly to those struggling in our community – experiencing homelessness or

hunger, a tragedy or trauma. Our team sees the incredible amount of goodwill and effort United Way gives to our neighbors and that inspires and compels us to continue giving.

For Priority Business Solutions, being a Pacesetter company adds to the culture of our organization and brings everyone together. We enjoy attending the United Way Campaign Kickoff breakfast and it's an energetic environment where we can celebrate together. We are truly working as a team for our community and I encourage other business owners to get involved as a Pacesetter Company, by joining the allocations committee or volunteering.

For more information, visit <https://unitedwaylee.org/>.

**Jonathan Gabel is president of Priority Business Solutions and serves on the Allocations Committee for United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties.**