



United Way of Lee,
Hendry, and Glades

United Way Initiatives with the Lee County School District

United Way Programs/Direct Services:

Community Partnership School- In partnership with the School District of Lee County, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Lee Health, United Way became the recipient of a Community Partnership School (CPS) grant from the University of Central Florida in January 2020 to establish Franklin Park Elementary as the first Community Partnership School in Lee County. This five-year grant provides funding and development support in becoming a Certified Community Partnership School and builds the foundation of a long-term partnership. The Community Partnership School is currently in year/phase two of the UCF grant, implementing programs and services. This year the school will receive \$167,306 and an additional \$25,000 has been awarded in Covid supplemental funds to assist in addressing increased barriers and bolster new opportunities such as STEM programming as well as family and community engagement activities. To date, matched contributions have totaled over \$500,000 of in-kind and financial donations utilized in service to the Franklin Park Elementary community. Through the success of the implementation at Franklin Park Elementary, United Way was thrilled to expand Community Partnership School efforts to Fort Myers Middle Academy (FMMA) creating a pathway of success through continuity of services as students move from elementary to middle school and have since grown to include services at Colonial Park Elementary School. Both elementary schools follow the feeder pattern into FMMA. Fort Myers Middle Academy received a \$750,000 grant from The Legacy Foundation at Gulf Harbour. This grant will support the school for 3 years. In addition to the \$750,000, FMMA received a one-time planning grant from the University of Central Florida (UCF) for \$75,000. Colonial Elementary was also awarded the UCF Planning grant of \$80,000.

The partnership embeds United Way staff at Franklin Park Elementary School, Colonial Elementary School, and Fort Myers Middle Academy to help further support children and families at the school, and in the surrounding community, through social services and collaboration.

Services, partnerships, and programs through the Community Partnership Schools have included:

Grace Community Church - Teacher Appreciation Breakfast

Fowler Street Grill - Staff Appreciation Breakfast

Midwest Food Bank - Weekly Hope Pack weekend food distribution and school food pantry

Hoops on Mission - Food donations and mentoring

Goodwill Industries - Employment assistance, parent, and community engagement

FGCU - virtual tutoring, student volunteers, work-study placement, and student internships

Lee Health - Wellness services and collaboration on a future school-based clinic

University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - Food and nutrition programming

Affordable Care Act Navigator - Health Insurance Marketplace and Medicaid enrollment

Holiday Assistance - Thanksgiving and Christmas support to families through community

United Way School Resource Center- This initiative began in mid-September 2020, as the brainchild of United Way employee Hannah Pelle and interim Superintendent Dr. Ken Savage. Our Lee County District school social workers, and school counselors assess our students in need and request essential items such as clothing, hygiene products and school supplies from the School Resource Center. Located at the School District's administrative offices on Colonial, in Fort Myers, United Way staff manages the inventory and uses the District's Pony System to provide our students these items be in the student's hands as quickly as possible. *As of February 2023, the value of the goods distributed is \$3,648,577, and 125,813 items have*



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been delivered to our Lee County students. The needs have grown more than ever with Hurricane Ian impacting our community,



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Hendry, and Glades

so many more families are finding themselves through exceedingly challenging times. This program is supported in part by the Price Foundation. The School Resource Center has also worked in partnership with the School District to provide specific uniform items to children in need through a \$4,500 grant.

ReadingPals- ReadingPals is a statewide early literacy initiative that provides volunteer mentors for students from Voluntary Prekindergarten and Kindergarten who may need extra literacy help, utilizing a one-on-one approach. The local program, implemented by United Way, aims to improve students' understanding of the fundamental building blocks of early literacy, as well as help students build a strong social-emotional foundation through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. For the 2021-2022 School Year, ReadingPals helped 70 children, sent over 1,000 books home with children, and had 782 volunteer hours dedicated to this program.

United Way Gifts in Kind- The Gifts in Kind program takes items donated by the community or sourced by United Way and distributes them to United Way's network of partner agencies and community organizations. Some of the specific programs within the School District that received items and support through the Gifts in Kind program include the Migrant program, School Resource Center, the Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, and a special Christmas in July Event.

School-Based Blood Drives- *9 High School-based blood drives were held in the 2021- 2022 school year in partnership with Lee Health and United Way donor initiatives.* These events encourage student community engagement and provide a lifesaving blood supply to our local health system. The United Way Volunteer Center also provides information for students at these events for volunteer opportunities, FAFSA assistance and 211 resources.

School District of Lee County Migrant Program- United Way has worked closely with the School District of Lee County to provide support for the migrant program's children and families. *Through United Way's Gifts in Kind program, \$71,410.61 in donated goods have been provided to the program including furniture, clothing, medical supplies, and home goods. Within this partnership, a vehicle donated to United Way was given to an identified family in need.*

College & Career Access Team in partnership with FutureMakers- United Way Volunteer Center staff assisted at over 52 FAFSA and financial aid sessions to help students and their families complete the applications, understand financial aid award letters, and complete the Florida Financial Aid applications during the 2021-2022 school year. The United Way staff have assisted career and guidance counselors conduct in person, and virtual FAFSA and Financial aid completion sessions, with FutureMakers and the Foundation for Lee County Public Schools as the lead for the FAFSA first team.

Tools for Schools: An annual United Way distribution event done through United Way's Gift in Kind program, in partnership with Publix, Tools for Schools provides needed school supplies for local teachers. *In*



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2021, United Way staff delivered Publix gift cards to every single school within the district to ensure they had support to purchase school supplies, food, or other needed items.

United Way Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) – Our United Way Volunteer staff and IRS-certified volunteers prepare and electronically file tax returns for free for residents who earn a household income of \$66,000 or less and specialize in helping families with earned income, education, and child tax credits. They file over 7,000 returns yearly and specifically assist approximately 20 families and staff each year through a special tax event at Franklin Park Elementary in 2022, A Community Partnership School. The program also advertises the District's Peach Jar system and has many teachers and staff that utilize the program. Fort Myers Middle School has been added as a VITA site for 2023.

Summer Break Spot- A United Way 211 contract with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to link children 18 and younger to summer food service programs, sponsors, and sites throughout Lee County. *Every year, the United Way 211 information and referral hotline connects hundreds of children in need to these locations.*

Civil Citation Program, Lee County Sheriff's Office- Students who have committed a minor offence will be able to serve volunteer time with the United Way, working on special community projects. *United Way has hosted several groups and connected them to meaningful opportunities.*

United Way Volunteer Center- The United Way Volunteer Center presents annually to Middle School and High School counselors, Career Specialists, and with several schools about volunteer opportunities throughout the community and frequently act as a connector to students looking for opportunities within the United Way network of agencies and partner organizations.

United Way 211- United Way 211 is an information and referral hotline that connects callers with needed social services such as utility assistance, and food insecurity assistance. Each year, United Way 211 assists thousands of callers, many of whom are families that reside within the District.

United Way Funded Programs:

United Way funds over 260 community programs, most of them touching the families of the Lee County School District. Below is a sampling of direct services to students of the District.

Social Norming/The Norm Project- The Norm Project is a School District of Lee County prevention initiative, funded by a grant from United Way that seeks to correct misconceptions about teen alcohol and drug use. Lee County students create posters and PSAs that send the message that most of their peers choose not to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.



United Way of Lee,
Hendry, and Glades

Blessings in a Backpack- Blessings in a Backpack, in partnership with the Lee County School District and United Way, mobilizes communities, individuals, and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children who might otherwise go hungry. The weekend backpack program includes four meals and snacks every weekend for 38 weeks (about 8 and a half months).

Boys and Girls Club- Boys and Girls Club provide at-risk youth with after-school and summer programming that includes character development, wellness, and academic support. United Way partners with Boys and Girls Club to support several Club locations throughout the County. The Boys and Girls Club and School District work together in several areas of collaboration for these club locations including transportation and snack for every club member.

Drug House Odyssey (Drug-Free Southwest Florida)- The Drug House Odyssey brings children from across the school district to experience a 40-minute walk through dramatization of real-life issues and effects of drug and alcohol abuse. Each year, the event serves thousands of children and their families.

FGCU Scholars Club- Based on the principles of Academic Excellence, Leadership, Service, and Citizenship, the Scholars Program is an honor society for 4th-12th grade students with a goal of developing a peer culture of success among its members. Activities focus on students who by virtue of their environment are at a disadvantage for achieving academic success when compared to the population at large and who are not challenged to achieve performance excellence through other programs or co-curricular activities.

Harry Chapin Food Bank- One in five children experiences hunger in Southwest Florida. About two-thirds of schoolchildren are either eligible for or receive free-or-reduced meals at school. United Way partners with Harry Chapin Food Bank to provide supplemental food to help keep children and their families fed. The In-School Pantry Program addresses child hunger by providing nutritious food to children and their families when they need it most, in convenient, familiar, and safe locations. In-school pantries operate within the school, and enlist the school staff, students, and others to distribute food to hungry families. Harry's Helpings is a program to help food-insecure families at sites where neither in-school pantries nor mobile pantries are available or feasible.

Meals of Hope- Meals of Hope is an Agency devoted to ending hunger. The agency provides easy-to-make, pre-packaged meals to food pantries across Lee County and through their own direct distribution. United Way partners with Meals of Hope to support its meal packing events. Through these events, meals



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have been provided to children identified by the School District of Lee County through backpack meal distribution.

PACE Center for Girls- Pace provides girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training, and advocacy. United Way specifically funds PACE's transitional services which help young woman who have attended PACE transition back into public school. The staff working in this program partner with individual school sites to ensure the PACE graduate has the emotional and academic support she needs to be successful!

Boy Scouts of America - United Way partners with Boy Scouts of America to fund the Scout Reach and Learning for Life programs, both offered across the School District of Lee County. The Scout Reach program ensures that every child can be a Scout, regardless of ability to pay.