

Heart of Florida United Way Establishes Emergency Services Program to Aid Military Veterans

Grants from The Walt Disney Company Foundation and Dr. Phillips Charities to Help Over 300 Florida Veterans

ORLANDO, Fla. (November 12, 2012) – In response to urgent need among many local military veterans, The Walt Disney Company Foundation and Dr. Phillips Charities have contributed to Heart of Florida United Way's (HFUW) Veterans Assistance Program. The program is designed to assist veterans and surviving spouses in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties who are struggling to pay for food, rent, utilities and other life necessities.

"We know that military veterans and their families face many challenges as they transition back to civilian life," said Robert H. (Bob) Brown, HFUW president and CEO. "While veterans represent just 9% of the overall population, they represent 17% of those who are homeless across our nation. Here in our own community, Heart of Florida United Way is grateful for the support of The Walt Disney Company Foundation and Dr. Phillips Charities to help local veterans survive difficult times, get back on their feet and lead healthier, more financially stable lives."

The Walt Disney Company Foundation has provided \$367,500 and Dr. Phillips Charities has provided a grant of \$132,500. As a result, HFUW estimates this \$500,000 will be able to help an additional 135 veteran households – or 345 individuals – over the next year.

A similar program was funded with \$238,650 from the Veterans Administration, which United Way administered on behalf of the Homeless Services Network of Central Florida. To date, 95 veteran families – or 242 individuals – have received temporary financial assistance, case

management support and other resources that have helped them stabilize their crisis and return to financial self-sufficiency; however, 80 potential clients remain on a wait list.

"For us to have the blessing of freedom, we must be willing to support those who fight and die to preserve freedom," said Robert L. Mellen, III, president of Dr. Phillips Charities. "Dr. Phillips Charities counts it an honor to help our veterans and their families help themselves."

Veterans or surviving spouses needing assistance can access help by simply dialing 2-1-1, United Way's free, 24-hour information and referral service and crisis helpline. Qualified households will then meet with a case manager who will assess the need for services, which may include rent, utility, transportation or childcare assistance.

The Veterans Assistance Program is being administered by the United Way Stewardship Department, which last year provided emergency assistance to more than 62,900 Central Floridians who were at risk of homelessness, hunger and other critical problems.

If you would like to contribute to the United Way Veterans Assistance Program, simply dial 2-1-1. For more information about Heart of Florida United Way and the work, visit www.hfuw.org or call 407-835-0900.

About Heart of Florida United Way

Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) is Central Florida's most comprehensive health and human services charity

and the largest provider of funds to the region's most critical health and human service programs. Last year it raised and managed \$25.3 million throughout Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. HFUW is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income, health and safety. It also operates United Way 2-1-1 & Elder Helpline, Central Florida's community crisis and suicide hotline and information and referral helpline; a Volunteer Resource Center; a Gifts In Kind Center; a Stewardship program that works with agencies to provide emergency assistance; and the Ryan White Part B program, which administers more than \$2 million to provide HIV/AIDS services and referrals. HFUW impacts more people annually than any charity operating in the tri-county area and partners with local businesses, government, other charities and individuals to increase awareness of local health and human service issues and to inspire hope, provide options and create possibilities for

people in need. In 2011, HFUW was awarded Charity Navigator's highest "Four-Star Rating" for exceeding industry standards in fiscal management and outperforming other charities in its area of focus. Visit www.hfuw.org for more information, or call (407) 835-0900.