

# Disney Hosts Central Florida Leaders in Exploring Ways to Help Children Succeed

**LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., June 2, 2014** – More than any other influence, positive relationships with adults are the key to kids’ success, according to research presented today at Children’s Summit 2.0: Discover Together, sponsored by Walt Disney World Resort and Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW).

More than 250 representatives of Central Florida nonprofits and community service groups gathered for the opportunity to analyze national experts’ research aimed at strengthening families and better preparing children for the future. The community stakeholders met at Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort for a day of presentations, forum discussions and networking.

“Today we learned that there’s simply no greater influence on childhood development than positive relationships with adults – from parents to coaches to mentors,” said Robert H. (Bob) Brown, president and CEO of HFUW. “By fostering connections between young people and influential adults, we help children become more successful *and* better prepared to grow into productive members of our community.”

The event included presentations by two experts – Dr. Helen Hadani, lead research strategist for the Center for Childhood Creativity, and Dr. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, vice president of research and development for the Search Institute. Children’s Summit 2.0: Discover Together also included small group discussions about opportunities for individuals, businesses, communities and nonprofits to make Central Florida a better place for families.

“This was a pivotal day for Central Florida, with positive ripple effects that will benefit our children for years to come,” said Nancy Gidusko, director of community relations at Walt Disney World Resort. “By bringing together the brightest minds and biggest hearts in our community, we’re helping children strengthen their connections with the adults in their lives and build a solid foundation for success in their futures.”

Today’s event was in follow up to the first Children’s Summit hosted by Walt Disney World Resort last fall. At that time, researchers identified community support of families as one of the keys to children’s success and wellbeing. The initial Children’s Summit brought together more than 400 stakeholders for strategic discussions about better serving local children.

The events align with Disney’s approach to community engagement, which emphasizes the benefits of strengthening relationships between children, parents and other adult role models.