



MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: July 1, 2022

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LIVE UNITED™

School Supply Drive for Hernando Teachers

United Way's 16th Annual Stuff the Bus (with no bus)

Spring Hill, FL –As many schools, businesses, and organizations continue to evolve after two years of working through a pandemic, so shall [United Way of Hernando County](#)'s 16th Annual Stuff the Bus event. Although this year may look a little different, United Way is dedicated to streamlining their supply distribution to local teachers. Stuff the Bus will actively take place **Thursday, July 7th through Friday, July 15th at all (8) Hernando Publix Stores**. *Internal school supply collections* will be conducted at each store, and organized at check-out or the display tables and collection bins.

"A recent community survey reported that Stuff the Bus is the most well-known program United Way offers, stocking over 100 local classrooms with needed supplies each year," shared United Way of Hernando County Executive Director, Angie B. Walasek. "Although Teacher Wish Lists will not be collected this year and volunteers will not be utilized in front of the stores, United Way will be distributing all collected supplies at the Hernando County School's 'Welcome Back Kickoff' for teachers at Crosspoint Church on August 3rd."

Studies show that teachers spend an average of \$750 of their own money each year on classroom supplies and needs. Walasek stated, "We have close to 1,600 teachers in our Hernando School system and this is exactly why this event remains a priority for our team. If we can alleviate even the slightest cost burden for a teacher by providing folders, a backpack, or composition notebooks so they can in return provide them to a student who's in need of the basics, then that is exactly what we'll continue to do."

Speaking of Needs

For 2022's Stuff the Bus however, you will not see the usual school bus at each store's parking lot - and it's for a reason. "Thanks to our amazing partnership with Publix, internal collections will work just fine. That yellow school bus though is iconic and is the staple to this event, but these are different times," Walasek explained. "We're fortunate to work hand in hand with our School Transportation Department and I'm here to promote that they are in desperate need of bus drivers, attendants, and mechanics. Our bus drivers usually volunteer their time each year to drop off the buses at each store and even help sort supplies, but there is barely anyone left." Angie Walasek continued, "We're not here to stretch them thin during the summer, we're here to promote their hiring and recruitment efforts. Similar to not having the appropriate classroom tools, this too is an unmet need that will impact our students."

"The staffing shortages we see affecting so many businesses is also having a direct impact on our transportation services," said Hernando County Schools' Director of Transportation Ralph Leah. "To transport more than 9,000 students each day, we need 125 drivers, 42 attendants and 10 mechanics. Right now, we have 37 open driver positions, 7 open attendant positions and 6 open mechanic positions. Without more drivers, attendants and mechanics, we simply won't be able to offer the same customer service our parents and students have come to expect."

Take Action

- **Purchase school supplies!** Donate them at any Publix Store in Hernando County, or drop off to the United Way of Hernando County office at 4028 Commercial Way, Spring Hill, FL 34606.

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- **Share this employment opportunity!** Interested applicants should visit the Hernando County School Board website at HernandoSchools.org or call the Transportation Department at 352-797-7003. Paid CDL Training included and full benefits available.

More information on United Way of Hernando County's Stuff the Bus and a list of recommended supply items can be found by visiting UnitedWayHernando.org/StuffTheBus. To easily donate online, visit UnitedWayHernando.org/GIVE.



(Pictured: 2021's Stuff the Bus collection display at Publix at Mariner Commons)

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United Way of Hernando County, Inc.:

[United Way of Hernando County](https://UnitedWayHernando.org) (UWHC) was established as a 501c3 organization in 1987, and since then has continuously focused on creating partnerships and mobilizing our community to seek sustainable solutions to some of the most pressing local needs. UWHC strategically allocates Community Investment Funds in Health, Education, & Financial Stability programs with proven results and local impact. UWHC works hard to balance the growing demand for basic services such as food, utilities, and rent assistance, with our ongoing commitment to tackling the underlying causes of complex issues. **United Way** partners with businesses and organizations that share our vision for improving lives through the power of collective impact and working together. Our support for long-term commitments are essential to addressing key social issues, such as helping children, youth, adults & elders, encouraging health and wellness, including physical and emotional care, promoting financial stability and self-sufficiency, and crisis intervention. For more information on how YOU can **LIVE UNITED**, visit www.UnitedWayHernando.org.