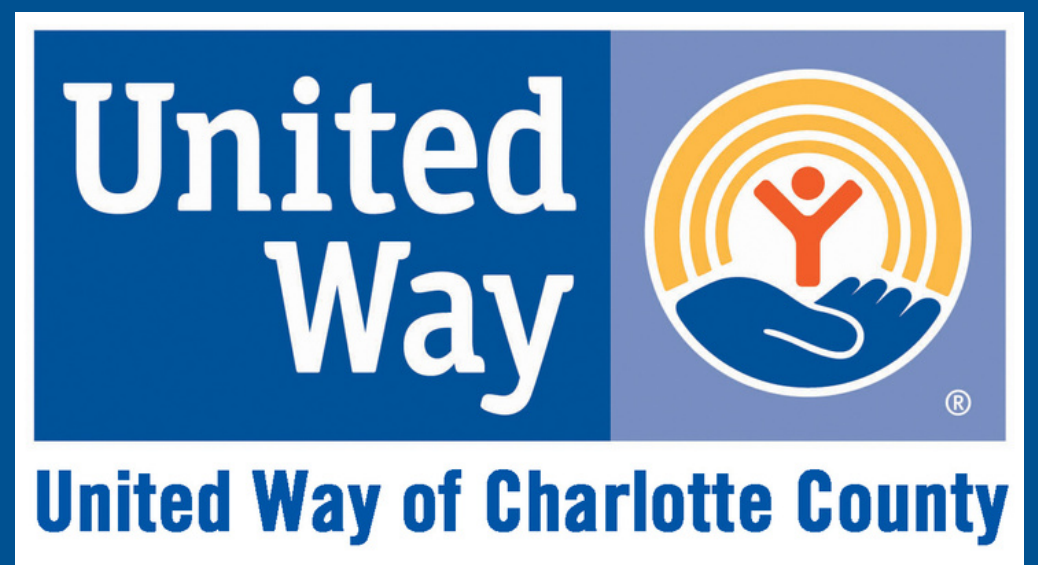


# Thinking BIG As a Small United Way

*United Way of Charlotte County*



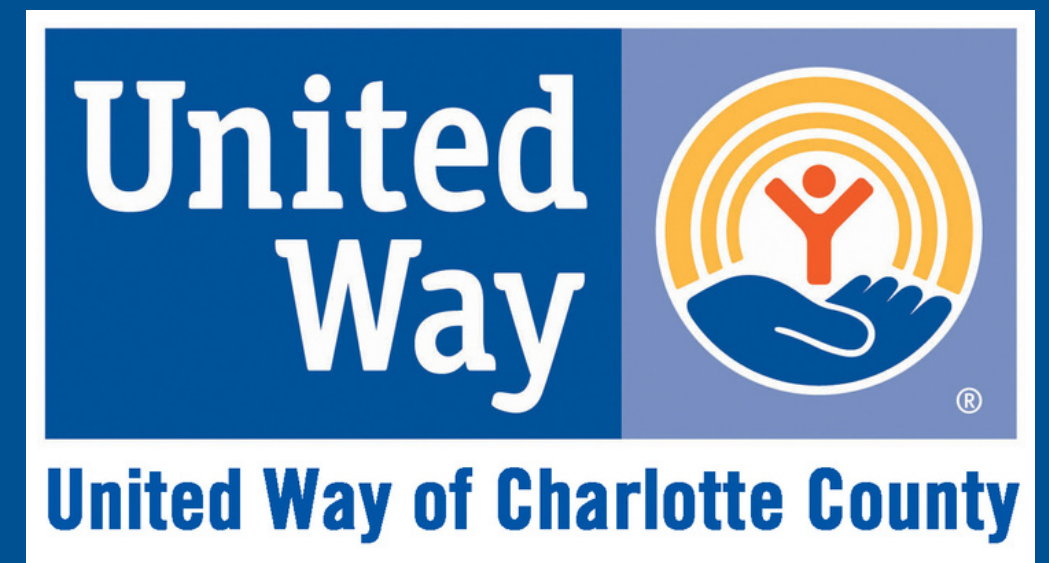






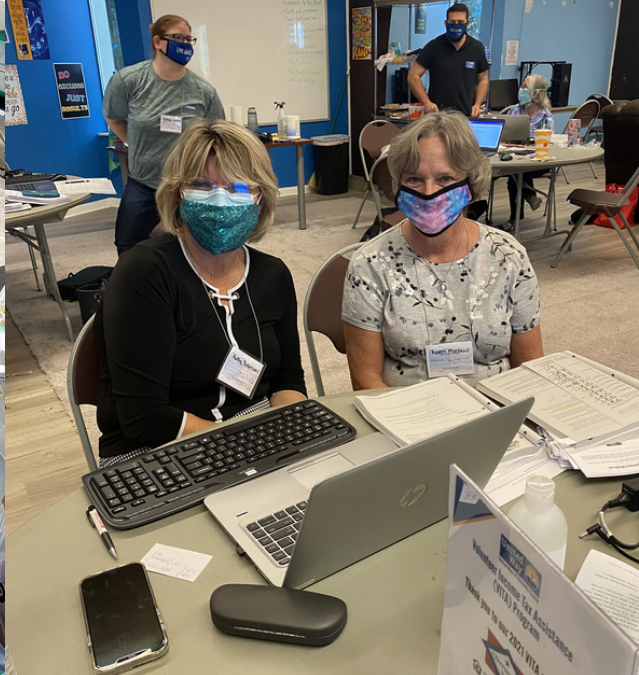
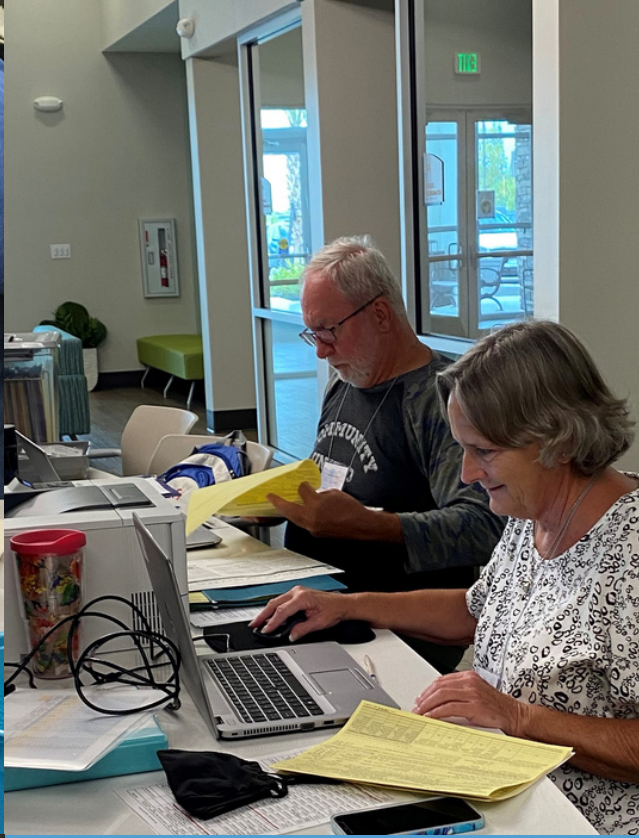
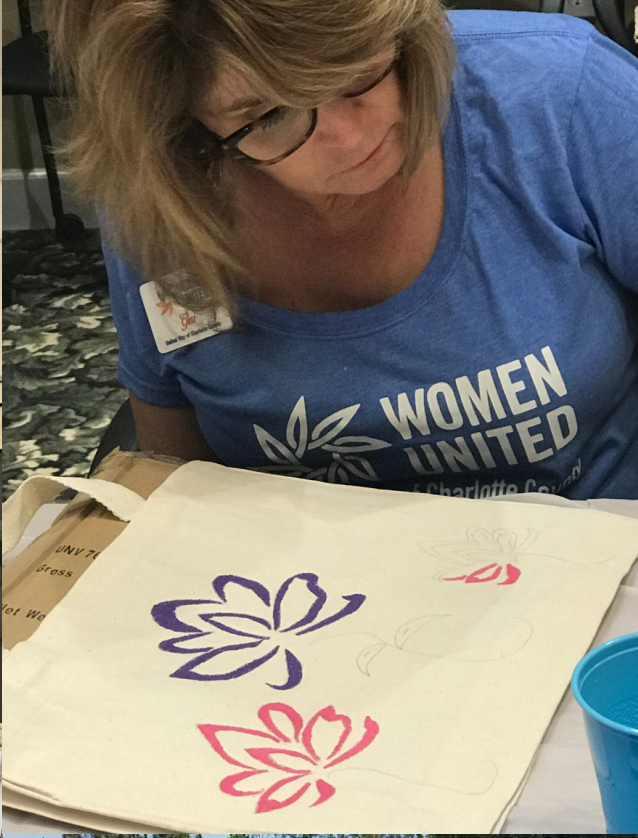
# The BIG Question

*What does United Way of  
Charlotte County do???*





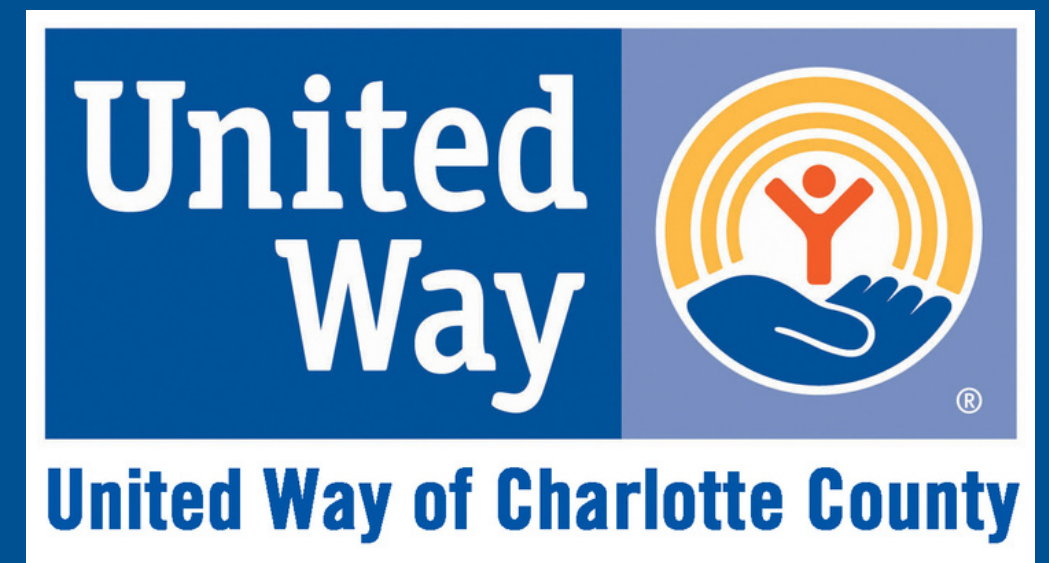
# What does United Way of Charlotte County do?





# The BIG Dilemma

*Lack of Resources /  
Limited Capacity*



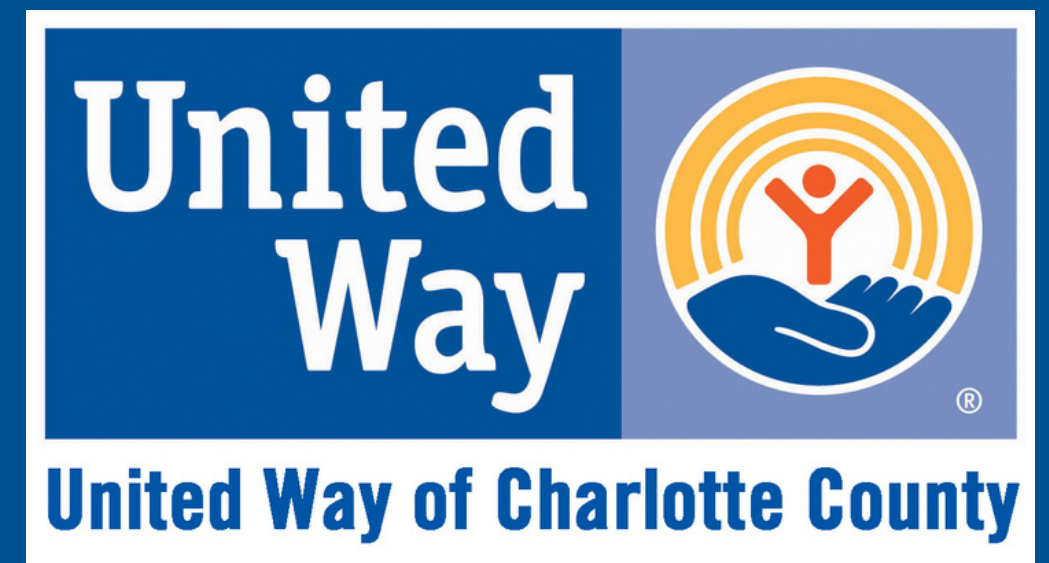
**Social Media**  
**Website Content Management**  
**Annual Reports**  
**Event Marketing Materials**  
**Etc.....**

**How do you add**  
**MORE???**



# The BIG Pitch

*In a SMALL Community*





COMMENTARY

# Bringing Sesame Street mentality to Charlotte County

### Volunteers connect parent engagement and kindergarten readiness



ANGIE MATTHIESSEN  
*United Way of Charlotte County*

What would have happened if Big Bird had never met Mr. Hooper?

To the average person, Sesame Street is a playful children's television show that includes what author Malcolm Gladwell has referred to as, "the artful blend of fluffy monsters and earnest adults."

model, the adults and the Muppets did not interact. Child psychologists that helped develop the show were concerned

credit for. The trick to tapping into those attention spans, however, is to find activities that are engaging to them. The materials in each year's Kindergarten Readiness Bags are a great starting point for engaging young learners. But the key, much

like with Sesame Street, is to get those fluffy monsters interacting with the adults.

Annually, The Patterson Foundation generously provides funding to purchase materials for Kindergarten Readiness Bags for all incoming kindergarten students across

Each bag needs to be stuffed with the individual educational materials provided by the Patterson Foundation and delivered to local preschool (VPK) providers. United Way of Charlotte County supports this effort through the coordination of annual bag-stuffing and distribution. Your help is needed on Feb. 22 at the Baker Center in Punta Gorda to stuff and/or deliver the Kindergarten Readiness Bags. Different stations and shifts are available from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

I know the expression, "It takes a village," is certainly

because we know the impact that early childhood education has on our community. Will you join us at the Baker Center to put these engaging materials in the hands of our young learners? Your efforts will help us bridge the gap between preschool students and the future of Charlotte County.

We are grateful for The Patterson Foundation for continuing to prioritize school readiness in our community. For more information on United Way of Charlotte County's work as Lead Agency for the Charlotte County

COMMENTARY

# Volunteers prepared to slay taxes

### VITA tax prep is underway



ANGIE MATTHIESSEN  
*United Way of Charlotte County*

With sword in hand, a bold knight approaches the dragon sleeping just inside the mouth of the cave. The knight positions his shield and then thrusts his sharp blade into a vulnerable spot. While not defeated with a single blow, the beast is eventually slain, and the knight is rewarded with a mound of gold coins the dragon has been guarding.

Perhaps tax season doesn't evoke images of fire-breathing dragons for you. At United Way of Charlotte County, however, our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) uses a software called TaxSlayer to prepare and file returns. For me, the name brings with it visions much more exciting than a CPA pecking away at a keyboard.

VITA volunteers serve as our knights in shining armor during tax season, sacrificing their time to prepare income tax returns for Charlotte County residents at no charge. With the 2022 tax season upon us, appointment scheduling is now open for households with incomes under \$66,000. Beginning Feb. 1, IRS-certified tax preparers, trained to use TaxSlayer

slay hundreds of tax returns for free over the next three months and put money back in the pockets of low- and moderate-income households in Charlotte County. In 2021, 732 tax returns were filed through our VITA program. Many clients used their tax refunds to pay bills, add to their savings accounts, purchase homes, and make home or car repairs.

UWCC's mission is to mobilize the power of our community to break the cycle of poverty. To that end, much of our work is focused on financial stability for those we serve. A foundation of financial stability is, for many households, their annual tax return. Tax refunds are the biggest paycheck many Americans see all year, providing an opportunity for these community members to budget for large expenses and supplement their monthly income. UWCC will offer

offering free tax preparation this tax season. Appointments must be scheduled in person between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. on Jan. 24 at the Punta Gorda Library or between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. on Jan. 26 at the Charlotte Harbor Beach Complex. More details on AARP's program are available by visiting [taxcharco.freecluster.eu](http://taxcharco.freecluster.eu) or calling 941-421-4739.

For those who are comfortable slaying their own return, free options with limited support are available to most taxpayers. United Way also offers MyFreeTaxes ([www.myfreetaxes.com](http://www.myfreetaxes.com)), which lets everyone with a simple return file their federal and state tax returns for free. You can also access [www.irs.gov/freefile](http://www.irs.gov/freefile) from a computer or smart phone for other no-cost tax preparation options.

UWCC is grateful for our VITA volunteers who wield sword and shield (pen and notepad) in service to our community. They truly are knights in shining armor, offering their time and talent to remove a barrier to financial stability for individuals and families in Charlotte County. Visit [www.unitedwayccfl.org/free-tax-prep](http://www.unitedwayccfl.org/free-tax-prep) for more information on our VITA program.

# Our Opportunity



COMMENTARY

# More magical than David Copperfield

### Home libraries expanded with magic postcards



ANGIE MATTHIESSEN  
*United Way of Charlotte County*

When David Copperfield made the Statue of Liberty disappear on television in front of a live audience, magic history was made. It was April 8, 1983. He dazzled the world with an illusion that seemed impossible, even for those who saw it with their own eyes. But I believe that something

and earned over 200 awards. More importantly, the children viewers loved the books they

Charlotte County's Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and probably our favorite intervention involves getting together to stuff Kindergarten Readiness Bags for every incoming kindergarten student in our county.

This year's stuffing event was held on Feb. 22. With materials provided by The Patterson Foundation and the help of 51 volunteers, UWCC was able to assemble and distribute nearly 1,200 bags of educational resources to preschool age

Magic Postcards.

Inside every bright yellow Kindergarten Readiness Bag is a postcard that is postage-paid and ready to be mailed. Parents and caregivers simply need to fill out the card and drop it in their mailbox. After the card is whisked away by your local mail carrier, the magic begins. In a short time, each postcard that is received by The Patterson Foundation is magically converted into another book that will be delivered to the family who sent it. No

magical than reading the most amazing book?

Sharing a book with a loved one – that's the real magic. My guess is that the vast majority of preschool-age children are not yet readers. This means that parents and caregivers have a big responsibility in making the most of this home library.

They are the ones who get to bring magic into their homes.

If your family has received a Kindergarten Readiness Bag, be sure to mail those postcards in.



# How to pitch yourself in a small media outlet:



## Newspaper

**bring the news to them**

Provide samples of newsworthy content - - make sure it is relevant, compelling, and informative.



## TV News

**better than B-roll**

Invest in quality video footage of your programs, your partner agencies, and your volunteers.



## Radio

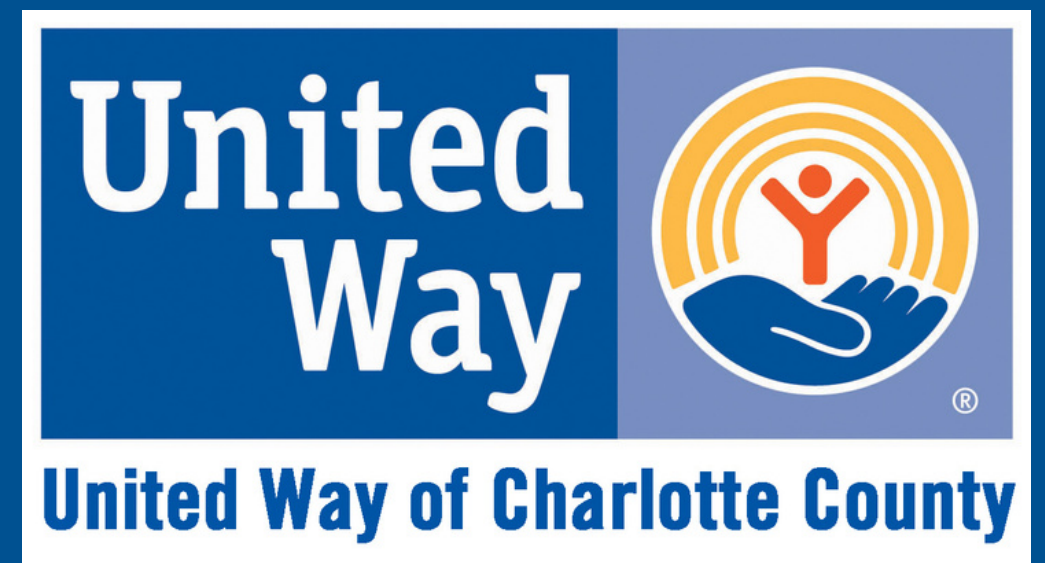
**social services spotlight**

Position your United Way as the liaison for current events in the health and human service sector of your local community.



# The BIG Outcome

*Shifting from Awareness  
to Understanding*





# Results



- **Volunteers**
  - VITA
  - Kindergarten Readiness Bags
  - Community Impact Panels
- **Women United members**
- **Relationships**
  - with partner organizations
  - with newspaper
- **OVERALL UNDERSTANDING**



*"I read the columns every week and find myself learning something new about what UWCC does and supports with its annual campaigns. I think it also helps the community understand that UWCC is an excellent steward of the donations received."*

**Glen Nickerson - Publisher, *The Daily Sun***

**100,000 daily print  
readers**



---

**www.**



**350,000 online users  
per month**