



NEWS

Dr. Nelson Ying Center • 1940 Cannery Way • Orlando, FL 32804
Phone (407) 835-0900 • Fax (407) 244-2805

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ashley Blasewitz, Ashley.Blasewitz@HFUW.org, (407) 835-0917

ORLANDO UNITED ASSISTANCE CENTER CONDUCTING RESEARCH TO ASSESS CURRENT, FUTURE NEEDS OF THOSE IMPACTED BY PULSE TRAGEDY

ORLANDO, FLA. (Feb. 5, 2020) – The Orlando United Assistance Center (OUAC) today announces a formal initiative will soon begin, seeking comments and feedback from immediate family members of those taken in the Pulse tragedy, survivors and first responders. This research is critical as the OUAC continues providing support, resources and hope for our community's continued healing.

A collaboration between the Heart of Florida United Way, City of Orlando, Orange County Government, Osceola County Government and the Central Florida Foundation, the OUAC was established in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. Its services have evolved over time – from family reunification to the Family Assistance Center at Camping World Stadium to its current, centralized location in downtown Orlando offering services to aid in the physical and emotional healing of those directly affected.

“We have learned from other communities affected by mass violence that victims’ needs change in many ways over time,” said Jeff Hayward, President & CEO of Heart of Florida United Way. “As we look toward the future, we must continue to evolve the OUAC to anticipate, understand and meet those needs. While we understand this is an incredibly difficult, taxing and emotional conversation, our hope is that every voice within the impacted community will be heard through this research and that we can determine how to best serve this community moving forward.”

Community volunteers Dr. Erica Fissel of the University of Central Florida and Zachary Murray, M.S., will lead the effort to directly connect with and learn from the individuals and families the OUAC serves. Participation in the research is voluntary, consisting of an anonymous, online survey and confidential, in-person focus groups. The survey will help OUAC determine client demographics, services utilized (if any), satisfaction with services, and barriers to service experienced. Through open-ended questions and focus group participation, participants will also be able to freely share any additional concerns, questions, suggestions or feedback.

For those who participate, the OUAC will provide additional information and mental health services throughout the duration of the research. Mental health counselors will be onsite for the focus groups.

The OUAC will begin contacting participants for this research on February 7, 2020. For more information or to request a survey, please contact the OUAC at (407) 500-HOPE. You can learn more about the OUAC at www.orlandounitedassistancecenter.org.

###



Heart of Florida United Way

NEWS

Dr. Nelson Ying Center • 1940 Cannery Way • Orlando, FL 32804
Phone (407) 835-0900 • Fax (407) 244-2805

About the OUAC: *The Orlando United Assistance Center (OUAC) was established in the immediate aftermath of the Pulse tragedy, evolving operations from initial family reunification at the Hampton Inn & Suites to the Family Assistance Center at Camping World Stadium offering robust information, support and resources to those directly affected. Located in downtown Orlando, the OUAC now serves as a centralized location offering services and support to aid in the physical and emotional healing of those who were present at Pulse on June 12, survivors and the immediate families of those taken. The dedicated OUAC staff are diverse, culturally experienced, trauma-informed, LGBTQ-affirming representatives of the Hispanic community. A collaboration between the Heart of Florida United Way, City of Orlando, Orange County Government, Osceola County Government and the Central Florida Foundation, the OUAC connects individuals and families to critical community resources.*

About the 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 \$24.4 million throughout Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. HFUW is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income, health and basic needs. It operates United Way 2-1-1, Central Florida's information and assistance, crisis, suicide and referral helpline; Volunteer Resource Center; Gifts In Kind Center; Emergency Homelessness Services; and the Ryan White Part B program, which administers more than \$2 million to provide HIV/AIDS services and referrals. HFUW impacts more than 650,000 individuals annually through its direct service and funded programs. United Way partners with local businesses, government, other charities to increase awareness of local health and human service issues and to inspire hope, provide options and create possibilities for people in need. Visit www.HFUW.org for more information, or call (407) 835-0900.*

###