

United Way of Indian River County divides \$1.7 million among 41 local nonprofits

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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — United Way of Indian River County will invest more than \$1.7 million in 41 local community programs this year, including three new programs focusing on children of prisoners, unemployed workers and teens, according to a Tuesday news release.

About 120 local volunteers met in April and May to decide how the \$1,725,566 raised during the United Way's annual campaign would be spent. Lisa Djahed, marketing director for United Way of Indian River County, said her organization chose programs relevant to local issues.

"Our main focus is on health education and income," she said.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee Counties received \$5,000 for its Children of Promise program, which partners children of prisoners with mentors from the community.

"It gives them a person to turn to while their parent is in the justice system," Djahed said.

The Economic Opportunities Council of Indian River County received \$12,500 for its Reach Program, which retrains unemployed workers.

Sue Rux, the program's executive director, said this money will train people to become certified nursing assistants, truck drivers and heavy equipment operators.

"We have a lot of adults who really need vocational training, but there are no funds or opportunities," she said. "This program helps people get on their feet and become self-sufficient."

The Substance Awareness Council of Indian River County received \$10,000 for its Life Skills Training program.

Robin Dapp, the program's executive director, said the program provides teens in the county's four public middle schools with communication and decision-making skills, which make them less vulnerable to peer pressures.

United Way CEO Michael Kint said his organization aims to help families struggling with the economy.

"Reports continue to come in from people looking for help to meet the most basic of needs," Kint said. "Our volunteers felt it was necessary to respond to those needs." For more information, visit www.unitedwayirc.org.