



United Way
of Northeast Florida

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****Media Advisory and Photo Opportunity****

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United Way Hosts First Introduction with Mayoral Candidates

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (April 22, 2010) – United Way of Northeast Florida’s young professionals group, Atlantic Circle, and Women in Local Leadership (WILL), its women’s affinity group, hosted the first “get-acquainted” session with the roster of 2011 Mayoral Candidates. Approximately 200 guests listened to candidates share their vision for Jacksonville and preview their positions on issues affecting First Coast children and families.

Moderated by Matthew Corrigan, Ph.D, Chair of Political Science and Public Administration, University of North Florida, audience members heard from candidates including: David Crosby, Beth Dickie, Robert Hutcherson, Kevin Hyde, Warren Lee, Audrey Moran, James Moser and Brenda White.

Current political trends suggest that city finances, public safety, business development and public education are expected to be at the forefront of this year’s campaign. Recognizing that its stakeholders are focused on addressing community-wide issues, United Way’s Atlantic Circle and WILL Executive Committees decided to offer their members the unique opportunity to hear firsthand from this year’s candidates.

Women and young adults play significant roles in elections, both on a national and local level. In Duval County, more than half of all registered voters are women. According to The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, there has been an increase in the young voter turnout rate, signaling a more engaged young adult population.

“Many of our Atlantic Circle and WILL members are very engaged politically, which is why we wanted to provide them with an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of where each candidate stands on several key issues, which will ultimately impact the direction our City takes going forward,” said Mary Goldsmith, Atlantic Circle Executive Committee co-chair.

Through volunteerism and advocacy, Atlantic Circle and WILL members play active roles in United Way’s initiatives focused on early learning (helping young children enter school ready to learn) and dropout prevention (ensuring students graduate on time). These issues, if not addressed, pose significant effects on the local economy and crime rate. By partnering together on this evening’s event, Atlantic Circle and WILL members have the opportunity to help influence candidates’ strategies on critical issues like these that have the potential for long-term improvement in the lives of many Jacksonville citizens.

Through their focus on ensuring children are ready to enter kindergarten, WILL members are helping lay the foundation for young students’ success in school. Research shows that for every \$1 dollar invested in high-quality early learning, \$17 is returned to the community. Throughout the year, members have the opportunity to participate in a number of volunteer efforts supporting United Way’s *Success By 6™* initiative, a program that addresses the issue of early childhood development. Most recently, WILL members joined the Early Learning Coalition of Duval in Tallahassee to lend their voices in support of high-quality early learning for preschoolers.

Studies indicate that only two-thirds of Duval County ninth-graders graduate on time. In 2008, high school dropouts represented a \$1.2 billion loss to Northeast Florida's economy over the course of their lifetime. Atlantic Circle, United Way of Northeast Florida's young professionals' group, is addressing the dropout crisis by lending their time as mentors and volunteering at United Way-supported agencies focused on helping students stay on track for graduation.

Questions on topics such as budget strategies, governance and education related goals will be answered by each candidate.

"United Way's Atlantic Circle and WILL members are invested and committed to improving the lives of children and families in our community," said Connie Hodges, President, United Way of Northeast Florida. "This is an exciting first opportunity to learn about each of the mayoral candidates in one setting and their positions on critical issues facing our city today."

United Way of Northeast Florida works to create real, long-lasting change in Northeast Florida by focusing on the building blocks for a good life. In partnership with volunteers, community organizations, and leaders, United Way is creating opportunities to improve life for people in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and northern St. Johns counties. In addition, United Way leads United Way 2-1-1, a 24/7 information referral hotline; Life: Act 2, a pro-active response to an exploding senior population; and Full Service Schools, a community approach to removing barriers to academic success. For more information, call 904-390-3200 or visit www.liveunitednortheastflorida.org.