

## United Way Achievers For Life

*United Way of Northeast Florida's mission is to unite people and resources in building a stronger healthier community. United Way inspires the community to give, advocate and volunteer to create lasting change in the lives of First Coast children and families. Through significant research, Early Childhood Success, Helping Students Achieve and Senior Engagement and Independence have been identified as issues receiving increased resources in the future. In addition, United Way leads efforts to increase the financial stability of families in our community and ensure that families in need have accurate, helpful information about social services through United Way 2-1-1.*

**WHAT:** United Way's Achievers for Life (AFL) is a researched-based dropout prevention initiative focused on 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who are at-risk for academic failure. Dropping out is a gradual process with signs appearing as early as middle school. Components include one-on-one weekly mentoring and counseling for students, family support services, as well as parent training to help principals increase families' engagement at school. AFL addresses the challenges associated with keeping students on track for high school graduation.

**WHY:** Nearly one of every three students fails to graduate on time. The cost of dropping out of high school is high not only for the student, but for their families and the community. Dropping out of high school impacts the local economy and safety of neighborhoods. High school dropouts earn approximately \$9,634 less per year than high school graduates and are ill-equipped to enter today's competitive workforce. On average, households headed by a high school graduate accrue **ten times** more wealth and have better odds of weathering an unexpected financial crisis than those headed by a high school dropout.

**RESULTS:** In school year 2008-09, 339 Duval County students in six Arlington, Springfield and Westside middle schools were enrolled in AFL. Evaluation results show that AFL students are more engaged and successful in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

- School absences decreased by 25% between fifth and sixth grade.
- AFL student GPAs improved 30% between fifth and sixth grade.
- AFL students experienced 26% fewer math and English failures than a comparison group.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Linda struggled to keep her grades up, only earning a 1.4 grade point average in the first semester of school. Through United Way's Achievers For Life initiative, a dropout prevention strategy, she was matched with a mentor, who met with her faithfully. During their meetings, Linda completed unfinished homework and improved her study skills. By the end of the school year, Linda's GPA had increased to a 2.35 and her confidence in her schoolwork had grown. United Way is focused on helping students achieve and stay on track for high school graduation.

### We need Your Help to Increase Our Success

- Be a mentor to an at-risk student
- Spread the word about Achievers For Life results
- Include information about Achievers For Life in company newsletters and other employee communications
- Encourage elected officials to support supports for struggling students