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## **Children's Week Events at the State Capitol Next Week**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – The United Way of Florida and its 132 partners throughout the state shine a spotlight on key issues affecting Florida's youngest citizens Jan. 24-29 when they host Children's Week, an annual celebration in Tallahassee which provides parents, policymakers, professionals, community leaders and concerned citizens with a platform to share valuable knowledge and advocate for children and family issues. Children's Week includes a variety of interactive and educational events and activities to be enjoyed by toddlers, teens and adults alike.

"Children's Week is not only about our children and the issues that affect them, but also about recognizing the organizations that work hard to provide the services needed to keep our children safe, healthy, ready to learn and able to achieve their full potential," said Ted Granger, president of The United Way of Florida. "We are striving to make positive child development and family function a top priority this Legislative Session."

Children's Week will commence on Sunday, Jan. 24, with the Hanging of the Hands ceremony during which thousands of paper cut-outs of children's hands will be hung inside the State Capitol. After this hallmark celebration, the majority of Children's Week activities will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 26, outside or around the State Capitol building. Here's an overview of events taking place:

- **Hanging of the Hands** will take place Sunday, Jan. 24, from 12–4 p.m. in the Capitol Rotunda. Thousands of pieces of children's "hand art" with messages to legislators will be hung from the ceiling of the Capitol building, creating an impactful display to remind policymakers to "give a hand" to Florida's children. The "hand art" is decorated by children at schools and childcare centers throughout Florida and mailed to organizers. The hands will remain on display until Friday, Jan. 29. Photos of "hand art" are also shared on social media using the hashtag #GiveUsAHand.
- **Children's Capitol for a Day** will take place Tuesday, Jan. 26, from 8:30 a.m.–2 p.m. on the State Capitol courtyard and is open to the public. Thousands of people are expected to attend. Free breakfast, lunch and Starbucks coffee will be provided for all attendees as they visit exhibitor booths hosted by Children's Week partners. One of the most popular events happening is the [Storybook Village](#) hosted by the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of the Big Bend. Over two dozen favorite children's stories will come to life as volunteers create a "village" of interactive reading booths with activities for children to explore. There also will be a Storybook Stage to hear stories read by local authors and leaders in the community. All children visiting the Storybook Village will receive a free copy of the book *Where the Wild Things Are*. Adults and children are encouraged to dress as their favorite storybook character.
- **"Teens Only" Town Hall Meeting**, hosted by the Florida YMCA Youth in Government, will take place Tuesday, Jan. 26, from 10:30–11:45 a.m. inside the Governor's Cabinet Room. It will provide a public forum for

students across the state to work together with [Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet](#) to address important issues relating to children's services. Youth are encouraged to attend and participate in the audience Q&A session. The event is free and will be filmed and live-streamed on [www.childrensweek.org](http://www.childrensweek.org).

- [Florida VPK Happy Birthday](#) will take place Tuesday, Jan. 26, from 12:30–1 p.m. on the back steps of the Old Capitol to celebrate 10 years of the program's success. Hear from Lt. Gov. Carlos López-Cantera, Rep. J. Dudley Goodlette, Commissioner Pam Stewart and others who have helped start VPK and have contributed to the program over the years, including teachers and students who were in the first VPK classes.
- **“Today's Youth: Tomorrow's Leaders” Workshop** will take place Tuesday, Jan. 26, from 1–2:30 p.m. at City Hall. This dynamic session will explore why the political process disappoints today's youth and what needs to happen in order to spark their civic engagement. The Children's Trust/Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) moderates this workshop geared to generate honest exchange and authentic conversation. This workshop is open to youth in middle school or high school who want to learn how to turn their passion into action and make a difference in the community.

In addition to events happening Jan. 24-29 in Tallahassee, local Children's Week events are happening around the state now through April. For more information about Children's Week and events in your community, to sign up to volunteer or to register your group for events, please visit [www.childrensweek.org](http://www.childrensweek.org).

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