

Give. Advocate. Volunteer. LIVE UNITED



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RE: Merger Application – SunTrust and BB&T

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- Annetta Wilson*

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter in support of the merger application submitted by SunTrust and BB&T. Given the long standing and significant support of the community by SunTrust, we are excited about the prospects for the community should this merger be approved.

BB&T and SunTrust have long been supporters of United Ways across the country in those markets in which they operate. Here in Greater Orlando, I want to speak specifically to the relationship, indeed partnership, between SunTrust and Heart of Florida United Way. I would submit to you that the way SunTrust operates and engages within our communities should serve as a model for other financial institutions across America.

SunTrust management makes clear that community service and engagement is part of the corporate culture. Senior managers can be found serving on non-profit boards, committees and in other volunteer capacities throughout the area. Their service includes general support as well as 'skill based' volunteering as they lend their business skills, financial acumen and life experiences to many causes. The employees of SunTrust regularly make themselves available for various volunteer activities from packaging hygiene kits for the homeless and back packs for low income school children to teaching financial education classes to single moms and reading to school children.

While I could provide many examples of SunTrust's engagement and generosity, I want to focus on just three significant contributions that SunTrust has made to this community and to the Heart of Florida United Way.

First, do you remember the day you got accepted to college? Was it a struggle getting in because you were the first in your family? Were you wondering how you were going to pay for it? Did you wonder what your life was going to be like if, and when, you graduated? Did you also wonder what life was going to be like if you did not graduate? Thousands of students face those struggles and ponder those questions every day here in Central Florida. We found that the number one reason a student did not finish their college education was not the lack of resources for tuition or books. Rather, they were forced to drop out when 'life simply got in the way', meaning when those perceived "simple" challenges in life arose. This included a car breaking down, the loss of a part time job or a family event such as a member falling ill. Because of these instances, students were dropping out of school and their lives took a significant downward turn. The results were long lasting adverse impacts leaving them with a far different economic future than what they had dreamed. We also found that for an average of \$720, these circumstances could be changed...forever. SunTrust partnered with Seminole State College and Heart of Florida United Way to create a program called "Destination Graduation". Its goal is to keep these students in school and graduate by helping them through those moments when life simply 'got in the way'. Because of SunTrust's generosity, their vision and their faith in people, we are proud to say that more than 980 students have received services and guidance. That's nearly 1,000 students whose lives who have been forever changed! They are on the path to financial stability and economic prosperity. They will earn their degrees and go on to contribute to our communities with their labor, skills and intelligence. They will be able to provide for their families in ways they could not have imagined. They struggled to hang on to those dreams when 'life got in the way'. SunTrust made this possible for these students, their families and their futures.

Second, when natural disasters and emergencies arise and call upon an entire community to come together to literally save lives, SunTrust responds. In 2017, Hurricane Irma tore through Florida. Shortly thereafter, Hurricane Maria engulfed the island of Puerto Rico leaving behind devastation never seen before. The entire island was without power, buildings were destroyed, schools were closed and many people fled the island to save their lives. Heart of Florida United Way has a sister-city relationship with Fondos Unidos de Puerto Rico. Because of that, and because Central Florida is home to the second largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the United States, we organized and prepared for the anticipation of evacuees leaving the island to come to Orlando. In doing so, an evacuee center was set up at Orlando International Airport. We, along with several other organizations, were at the airport to receive these evacuees who had just experienced the devastation of Hurricane Maria and had fled on humanitarian flights. In order for us to greet the 1,800 evacuees per day that started arriving, and continued for weeks afterward, we had to call upon volunteers from the community. Starting with our corporate partners, SunTrust was one of the first companies to respond. Immediately, they provided dozens of their Spanish speaking employees to volunteer at the airport with us. Many of these SunTrust team members had family still in Puerto Rico and their passion, empathy and commitment made a huge difference in serving the evacuees. Indeed, Heart of Florida United Way was the only organization providing emergency housing to the evacuees. In the end, we provide more than 3,000 hotel nights to over 1,000 evacuees along with other services they needed to stabilize their lives. Sometimes, it was simply listening and providing care and comfort to those who wanted to share their story of devastation. It was the SunTrust team that was one of the first to answer the call to serve. And serve they did! Working in six hour shifts, seven days a week, we were able to speak with nearly 10,000 evacuees. And the SunTrust team contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to make the effort a success. The caring and compassion of the SunTrust team played a significant role in our ability to meet the needs during this difficult time.

Finally, in the role of good governance, SunTrust has always supported many organizations through Board service. Non-profit organizations need smart, engaged, thoughtful and community minded people to serve as Board Members. Heart of Florida United Way has been quite fortunate to have some of SunTrust's most senior team members join our Board. In the past we have had the pleasure of having SunTrust's market president, the director of the SunTrust Foundation, and other senior staff. At this time, we are fortunate to have Sandra Hostetter, SunTrust's Central Florida Market President and Tammy Paycer, Senior Vice President of Community Development as Board Members. They are engaged Board Members who contribute their time and talents to the betterment of United Way and to the community at large.

The success of corporations gets measured in many different ways. As communities, we often measure their value as to how many jobs they provide and how well those jobs pay. We also measure them as to what type of corporate citizen they are and how they engage in the community. Are they generous with their employees' time in the area of volunteering? Do they lend their skills to the community in addressing challenges such as literacy, financial empowerment, youth mentoring, etc.? Do they provide financial support to worthy causes that will make lasting change? If these are the measures by which we value a corporation's citizenship, then I can say, without hesitation, that SunTrust is a valued community partner, an outstanding corporate citizen, and an organization that has made this community stronger and richer in all senses of the word.

Please know we wholeheartedly support the merger application of SunTrust and BB&T as we believe that it will continue to strengthen this Central Florida region.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Jeffery J. Hayward.

Jeffery J. Hayward
President and Chief Executive Officer