

The NFL, Houston Texans, United Way of Greater Houston, United Way Worldwide and Verizon Launch Character Education Initiative
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HOUSTON, Feb. 3, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- The NFL, Houston Texans, United Way of Greater Houston, United Way Worldwide and Verizon have announced the Houston launch of **Character Playbook™**, a new education initiative focused on youth character development and building healthy relationships. The interactive digital program will be implemented directly in schools throughout Houston.

Character Playbook is the latest innovation in the more than 40-year partnership between the NFL and United Way. Character Playbook modules are designed to help students develop healthy relationships and social norms. The program will be evaluated by measuring student knowledge gains as well as attitude and behavioral change.

"We are pleased to use Super Bowl week as a platform to launch Character Playbook and provide valuable resources to classrooms and students in Houston," said NFL Senior Vice President of Social Responsibility **ANNA ISAACSON**. "The program encourages youngsters to develop healthy relationships and stand up for others and as the leaders of tomorrow, young people benefit from being educated on these important attributes."

The launch event at Pilgrim Academy today took students through the Character Playbook modules. Houston Texans players **JEFF ALLEN** (G) and **KURTIS DRUMMOND** (FS), and NFL Legend and Super Bowl champion **DONALD DRIVER** led a panel in front of more than 300 students to discuss character development and decision-making. Character Playbook will be implemented in all 32 NFL markets, courtesy of the United Way Worldwide and the NFL Foundation.

"Every day we strive to be champions for youth at the Houston Texans and we believe the Character Playbook program will educate students around Houston to better prepare them for the road ahead," said **JENNIFER DAVENPORT**, vice president of marketing and community development at the Houston Texans. "We are proud to partner with the United Way and Verizon on such an important initiative."

"Helping young people build confidence, character, communication skills, and healthy relationships are so important to students' success both in and out of the classroom," said **ANNA M. BABIN**, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Houston. "United Way of Greater Houston works to help young people build a foundation for success, and we are excited to partner with the Houston Texans and Verizon to further that work through Character Playbook."

Character Playbook uses evidence-based strategies to educate students on how to cultivate and maintain healthy relationships during their critical middle school years. The course is comprised of six interactive, digital modules that cover key concepts around positive character development, social-emotional learning, and building healthy relationships. Designed for 7th – 9th graders, the digital learning experience enables students to engage with true-to-life scenarios that include bystander intervention strategies and positive relationship examples.

"Bullying, cyberbullying and teen dating violence continue to be pervasive issues that put immense pressure on communities across the United States," said United Way Worldwide president and CEO, **BRIAN GALLAGHER**. "Couple that with escalating violence, strife and lack of trust and opportunities in communities and it underscores the real need for programs that help kids understand how best to manage emotions, resolve conflicts and communicate effectively."

"At Verizon, we believe it is important to use our resources and expertise to create innovative solutions that help the underserved in our community," said **KRISTA BOURNE**, Verizon Market President-South Central. "Through the Verizon Innovative Learning program, we have focused our resources on education and character development programs. By supporting Character Playbook in Houston, we can make an impact and address topics that are critical to the success of middle school students in greater Houston."

The Character Playbook initiative was launched nationally during the 2016 NFL Draft and is powered by education technology leader EverFi, which works with more than 20,000 K-12 schools.

About The NFL Foundation

The National Football League Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of those touched by the game of football – from players at all levels to communities across the country. The NFL Foundation represents the 32 NFL clubs and supports the health, safety and wellness of athletes, youth football and the communities that support our game. For more information on the NFL Foundation, visit: www.NFLFoundation.org.

About The Houston Texans

The Houston Texans were inducted the NFL's 32nd franchise on Oct. 6, 1999 thanks to a city-wide effort spearheaded by local businessman and franchise founder and owner Robert C. McNair. The Texans have since evolved into Forbes Magazine's 14th-most valuable professional sports franchise in the world with an estimated value of \$2.5 billion and are annually among the Houston Chronicle's Top 100 places to work in the city. The Houston Texans are the only expansion team to have won its first game, defeating Dallas 19-10 on Sept. 8, 2002 and have sold out every preseason, regular season and postseason game in franchise history, donated more than \$26.5 million back to the community through the Houston Texans Foundation and won AFC South division titles in 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2016. NRG Stadium, the NFL's first retractable-roof stadium, is the home of the Texans.

About The United Way of Greater Houston

For more than 90 years, United Way of Greater Houston has been a leader and trusted partner in improving lives, tackling key community social issues and making a lasting difference. Last year, United Way of Greater Houston touched the lives of more than 2 million of our neighbors in the Bay Area and in Fort Bend, Harris, Montgomery and Waller counties. United Way focuses on strengthening our community by developing children and youth to their full potential, creating strong families and safe neighborhoods, sustaining senior independence and rebuilding people's lives in times of crisis. United Way of Greater Houston is the best way to make the biggest difference in our community, changing Houston for good. For more information, please visit, www.unitedwayhouston.org.

About United Way Worldwide

United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in every community. Supported by 2.8 million volunteers, 9.8 million donors worldwide, and more than \$4.7 billion raised every year, United Way is the world's largest privately-funded nonprofit. We're engaged in nearly 1,800 communities across more than 40 countries and territories worldwide to create sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our communities. United Way partners include global, national and local businesses, nonprofits, government, civic and faith-based organizations, along with educators, labor leaders, health providers, senior citizens, students and more. For more information about United Way, please visit UnitedWay.org. Follow us on Twitter: @UnitedWay and #LiveUnited.

About Verizon

Verizon Communications Inc. (NYSE, Nasdaq: VZ), headquartered in New York City, has a diverse workforce of 160,900 and generated nearly \$126 billion in 2016 revenues. Verizon operates America's most reliable wireless network, with 114.2 million retail connections nationwide. The company also provides communications and entertainment services over mobile broadband and the nation's premier all-fiber network, and delivers integrated business solutions to customers worldwide.

About EverFi, Inc.

EverFi, Inc. is the education technology innovator that empowers K-12, higher education, and adult learners with the skills needed to be successful in life. Its comprehensive critical skills platform is focused on Financial Education, Digital Citizenship, STEM Career Readiness, Diversity and Inclusion, Entrepreneurship, Character Education, and Health and Wellness. The EverFi Education Network is powered by more than 3,300 partner organizations across all 50 states and Canada and annually reaches 6 million learners. Learn more at everfi.com

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