H.E.R.O. for Children, Inc. serves children between the ages of 6 and 18 (upon admission), living in the metro-Atlanta, Augusta, Albany, Macon, Athens, Savannah and Rome areas, who are infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

All services are provided free of charge.

*Infected* = A child who is HIV positive or has been diagnosed with AIDS.

*AFFECTED* = An affected child meets at least one of the criteria listed below:

- Has an immediate family member (i.e. mother, father, brother, or sister) who has been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS
- Has lost an immediate family member (i.e. mother, father, brother or sister) to death as a direct result of an HIV/AIDS-related illness
- Upon admission into our programs, resides in the same household as an extended family member (i.e. aunt, uncle, grandmother or grandfather) who has been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
H.E.R.O. MISSION

H.E.R.O. for Children, Inc.’s mission is to improve the quality of life for children infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS through enriching programs, unforgettable experiences and connections with the community.

H.E.R.O. HISTORY

Hearts Everywhere Reaching Out (H.E.R.O.) for Children, Inc. was founded in 2003 by two University of Georgia graduates (Ryan Gembala and Garrett Gravesen) who had two separate but similar experiences working alongside children infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS in Brazil and Africa. They observed that though the children’s basic needs (food, housing and medical attention) were being addressed, they received no specific ‘quality of life’ (QOL) care services. They decided to explore this problem in Georgia. Research found that of the 500 organizations serving persons with HIV and/or AIDS in the state at that time, only 12 provided services to children, and none addressed the QOL needs of these children. As a result, H.E.R.O. for Children was created.

SUPER HEROES PROGRAM

A one-on-one mentoring program in which children ages 6 to 16 (upon admission) receive quality of life support that improves their self-esteem, self-confidence, goal-setting, socialization skills and academic performance. Our mentors, who we call “Super HEROes”, provide constant care and guidance to their “Little HEROes” as they develop into young adults.

BRIGHT HEROES PROGRAM

An educational enrichment program which aids in developing the children’s talents and supports their pursuit of higher education or training. Through this program, H.E.R.O. is able to provide scholarships, stipends, and academic or professional development support.

CAMP HIGH FIVE

A week-long, residential summer camp program that provides recreational and educational activities to H.E.R.O. children. It is the only program of its kind in Georgia, and serves youths between the ages of 6 and 16. In partnership with Camp Twin Lakes (established to offer camping experiences to medically fragile children), the program offers a wide range of recreational activities to these children including rock wall climbing, fishing, archery, boating, nature walks and much, much more!

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

A program in which high school aged children attend an annual, weekend retreat, as well as seminars and workshops throughout the year, that address topics including the college application process, identifying academic scholarships, accessing internships, resume writing, interviewing skills and appropriate professional behavior.

HOLIDAY OF HEROES PROGRAM

An annual outreach to provide children with one gift they need and one gift want during the holiday season. H.E.R.O. currently serves approximately 350 through Holiday of HEROes.

UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

Events that provide children with an outlet to experience the normal joys of childhood. These recreational outings include sporting events, theatrical performances, and activities organized by the University of Georgia’s HEROs and Georgia Tech’s HEROs (college philanthropy organizations).

QUALITY OF LIFE

We define quality of life as the degree to which an individual enjoys physical, social and emotional well-being, and sees him/herself as being able to experience future success and fulfillment. Under this umbrella we offer support through mentoring relationships, life skills development, recreational activities and expanded life exposure via a variety of opportunities and experiences.