

# United Way of Southern Chautauqua County

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## **Free Tax Preparation Begins January 30**

The Chautauqua County Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition will kick off this year's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program on Saturday, January 30.

Throughout the tax season, VITA sites prepare income tax returns for income-eligible, working residents - helping them to qualify for all tax credits they may be entitled to, including the Earned Income Tax Credit. The combination of available federal and state credits can be substantial.

Hundreds of local residents could get larger refunds, as well as free tax preparation, through the program. Last year, 57 trained VITA volunteers helped 1,160 eligible taxpayers in Chautauqua County to collect over \$1,520,000 in state and federal refunds. To qualify, working families must have earned less than \$48,279 in 2009.

The program uses trained, IRS-certified, volunteers to work with taxpayers to fill out their forms. Most returns will be filed electronically, and refunds could be received in as few as ten days, at no cost to the individual. The VITA program provides free preparation, free electronic filing, and fast access to all of your tax refund.

United Way Director of Community Building P. Richard Fleurant said, "the VITA program is very important to the people we are able to serve and to our local economy. Our goal each year is to help eligible taxpayers to receive the full value of their federal and state tax credits and refunds. This really helps the people in our community who need help the most."

The Southern Chautauqua County VITA kickoff will be held at the Raymond J. Fashano Technical Academy, 200 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 30. The program will continue through April 1 at sites in Busti, Cherry Creek, Clymer, Jamestown, Falconer, Lakewood, Panama, and Sinclairville. **All sites require appointments.** For information about income guidelines; tax preparation sites, dates, and times; and what to take with you to the tax site; or to make an appointment for tax preparation, call Chautauqua County's information and referral line by dialing **2-1-1**.

Members of the Chautauqua County Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition include the Chautauqua County Department of Social Services, Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc., Southwestern Independent Living Center, and United Way.

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