

United Way of Southern Chautauqua County

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Free Tax Preparation Starts January 28th

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program kicks off the 2012 season **Saturday, January 28th, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Chautauqua Works on Third Street in Jamestown.**

Since its inception ten years ago, the program has helped thousands of local taxpayers collect millions of dollars in tax refunds. It's sponsored each year by the Chautauqua County Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition, which includes representatives from the Chautauqua County Department of Social Services, Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc., Southern Chautauqua Federal Credit Union, Southwestern Independent Living Center, Chautauqua County RSVP, and the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County.

Throughout the tax season, VITA sites prepare tax returns for income-eligible residents, helping them qualify for tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit. But it's not just families that benefit from the program. Last year, close to 2 million dollars was returned to the local economy because of the VITA program.

"The VITA program is essential to the people we serve and to the local economy," said United Way Director of Community Building P. Richard Fleurant. "When people have a larger tax refund in their pocket, they'll spend that money – and that helps us all. Our goal each year is to help eligible taxpayers get the largest tax refund they can get."

Hundreds of local residents could get larger refunds, as well as free tax preparation, through the program. To qualify, working families must have earned less than \$49,078 in 2011.

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 100% of an individual or family's tax refund.

The program will continue through April 17th at sites in Jamestown, Mayville, Falconer, Lakewood, and Sinclairville. **All sites require appointments.** For information about income guidelines; tax preparation sites, dates, and times; what to take with you to the tax site; or to make an appointment for tax preparation, dial **2-1-1**. You can also find the information online at www.uwayscc.org.

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