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**United Way of
Southwestern Pennsylvania**

Low-income individuals, families find assistance through United Way’s Free Tax Prep program
27 locations available across region in 2018

Pittsburgh, Pa. (*Thurs., Jan. 18, 2018*) – In its ninth year, United Way of Southwestern PA will offer free, in-person tax preparation at 27 sites across the region to eligible individuals and families. Appointments can be made now; sites opened the week of January 15, 2018.

“This campaign helps prevent low-income working people in our community from falling behind. The earned tax credits and refunds these individuals secure help families meet basic needs, such as putting dinner on the table or paying a utility bill or rent,” said Kiandra Foster, program manager United for Families, United Way. “This year, 446 volunteers have joined the effort and have become IRS-certified and trained to solve the tax problems, and potentially find resources to help with other problems, faced by people in our community.”

During the 2017 tax season, a single woman raising her seven-year-old granddaughter came to one of United Way’s tax sites. It was the first year she learned about the free tax service and was extremely thankful after paying \$325 in 2016 to get her taxes completed. To her surprise, she not only had her taxes prepared free of charge, but United Way’s volunteer tax preparers taught her about various credits she was eligible for and helped her receive a refund of more than \$6,000. This was a relief as the woman had several mounting utility bills. She, among many more throughout the region, were able to receive well-earned refunds to help with basic needs and keep them on track.

Last year across the region, 457 volunteers dedicated more than 22,000 hours to help prepare over 10,000 tax returns, saving taxpayers over \$1.7 million in tax preparation fees. They also helped many working families obtain the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), one of the nation’s largest anti-poverty programs. Taxpayers who qualify and claim the credit could pay less federal tax, pay no tax, or even get a tax refund of \$500 to nearly \$6,300.

The 12th Annual EITC Awareness Day will be held on Friday, January 26, 2018. The IRS and nationwide partners join together each year to launch the Awareness Day outreach campaign to ensure millions of workers secure the credit they earned. The EITC is earned by low- to moderate-income working individuals based on income and number of children and is one of

the strongest tools to help people build financial self-sufficiency, keep people working and lead children into successful futures.

While improving access to the Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax benefits, United Way also works to connect households to other local resources for which they are eligible. When scheduling an appointment, households can get connected to valuable services that assist with childcare, transportation, emergency food, utility payments, healthcare enrollment, elderly care, and more.

Appointments for free tax preparation can be made now by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting www.pa211sw.org. Households with a total annual income up to \$54,000 *may* qualify for free in-person tax preparation; free online tax assistance is available for individuals and families with a total annual income up to \$66,000.

About United Way of Southwestern PA – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

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