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United Way of
Southwestern Pennsylvania

United Way promotes initiative to support financially struggling families *515 volunteers needed to help working people secure earned tax credits, refunds*

Pittsburgh, Pa. (Nov. 12, 2018) – United Way of Southwestern PA, in partnership with the Free Tax Prep Coalition, is recruiting volunteer tax preparers to support its 2019 Free Tax Preparation Campaign. More than 515 volunteers are needed to commit just three hours each week to prepare tax returns for hard-working, low-wage earning families and individuals from January through mid-April.

“Many individuals who come to us for help with their taxes are unaware of some of the refunds for which they are eligible. This money might be the help a family needs to keep the heat on through the winter or put dinner on the table for their children,” said Kiandra Foster, director of programs, United for Families, United Way. “Our volunteers – from businessmen and women, to retirees, to student interns and more – help identify some of those refunds and work through any complex situations that might arise.”

No prior tax preparation experience is necessary for someone to volunteer. United Way partners with the IRS to provide both in-person and online training and resources. Continuing education credits are available for professionals, and internship opportunities are available for students.

“While many tax sites provide costly services, our sites allow qualifying taxpayers to get reliable help, free of charge, so they can use their refund toward basic needs. And if we see a family who might benefit from other services, we can help them find those resources to ensure they’re back on their feet,” Foster said.

Last year across the region, 480 volunteers dedicated more than 22,000 hours to help prepare nearly 10,500 tax returns. They 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.

Volunteers must sign up before January 1, 2019. Volunteers are needed at sites across Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette, Greene and Washington counties and can sign up at www.swpafreetaxes.org.

Appointments for free tax preparation can be made beginning January 10, 2019 by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting www.pa211sw.org. Households with a total annual income up to \$56,000 *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, Butler, 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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