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United Way's Free Tax Prep program seeks to help 12,000 individuals receive critical refunds
Free and accessible sessions with certified IRS-trained volunteers are now available

PITTSBURGH (January 16, 2024) – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania's Free Tax Prep Coalition is offering free in-person tax preparation and access to free online filing for individuals across the region. These services are available to residents in Allegheny, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties and are provided in partnership with nonprofit, education and community organizations. The program ensures people working hard for low pay receive the maximum refund they have earned, without any fees.

"Taxes alone can feel burdensome for hard-working families trying to make ends meet. When you add service fees on top of that, the process can be overwhelming and expensive," said Alena Anderson, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania's director of Moving Toward Financial Stability. "Many families are unaware of the additional funds they could receive from the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. Our volunteers help filers get the money they have earned and deserve so they can put food on the table, buy their children's school supplies, pay for transportation, build up their savings account and so much more."

This year, more than 300 volunteers have signed up to help their neighbors prepare their taxes and work toward financial stability. Services available at tax sites include: locations that are accessible for people using wheelchairs; email, chat, and phone support for people who file online; over-the-phone interpretation in more than 170 languages; Language Line services for people who are hard of hearing or deaf; and partnerships with agencies who can help filers without a social security number.

All Free Tax Prep Coalition volunteers are IRS-certified to provide a high-quality service and ensure taxpayers receive accurate returns and the full refunds they are entitled to. Just Harvest, a United Way partner agency, oversees training and coordinates operations across the coalition.

United Way's Free Tax Prep Coalition helps families access valuable tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit. The EITC benefits working people with low to moderate income, and taxpayers who qualify could pay less federal tax, pay no tax, or even receive a tax refund. According to the IRS, Pennsylvania processed one million EITC claims last

year, with an average EITC amount of \$1,874. The Child Tax Credit is a federal tax benefit available to taxpayers with dependent children under 17. People who fit the criteria may be eligible to claim a tax credit of up to \$2,000 per qualifying child. [Together, these two tax credits lift more families out of poverty than any other program in the country.](#)

Last year, 280 volunteers working at 20 Free Tax Prep locations prepared nearly 8,000 returns, saved working families more than \$2 million in tax prep fees and generated \$10.6 million in refunds. When MyFreeTaxes returns are included, the impact of United Way's Free Tax Prep program in the region overall increases to 8,250 returns and a refund total of \$11.1 million.

Free tax preparation services are available now through April 15, 2024, by visiting www.pa211.org/vita, dialing 2-1-1 or texting a zip code to 898-211. Free Tax Prep is available for individuals with a total income of up to \$45,000 and families with a total annual income up to \$65,000. And free, do-it-yourself online tax assistance is available through [My Free Taxes](#) for all individuals and families, regardless of income.

About United Way – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland counties, convenes and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people meet basic needs, move toward financial stability and build for success in school and life. Together with dedicated donors and caring volunteers, United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

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