

March 14, 2016

VITA Awareness Day March 15

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Benefits Millions of Modest Taxpayers

On Tuesday, March 15, tax advocates from across the country will celebrate Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and volunteer tax preparers for the work they do to help families, seniors, and individuals file taxes correctly and receive the benefits they've earned. Each year VITA programs put billions of dollars back in to the pockets of modest taxpayers nationwide.

With just a month until tax season officially ends, volunteers who prepare taxes for the IRS-regulated Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program expect to help return almost \$4 billion in federal tax refunds this year to more than 3.3 million nationwide who have modest incomes and could not otherwise afford to have their taxes prepared.

The largest VITA program in southeast Michigan, operated by the nonprofit Accounting Aid Society with 600 volunteers -- expects to serve more than 21,000 low- to moderate-income households this tax season, and help bring back more than \$22 million in tax refunds and credits.

VITA volunteers train, test, and must become IRS-certified in order to serve as tax preparers. VITA programs, like the one run by Accounting Aid, are invaluable in helping stabilize household budgets and helping families meet financial obligations, keep food on the table, and keep people in their homes.

Accounting Aid Society's VITA program is much more than no-cost tax preparation. It's also the first step in learning what other services and support Accounting Aid offers, including financial coaching, help filing college applications, and debt tax relief.

"At Accounting Aid, we want each person who walks into our office to leave with a financial plan for a better life," says Kathleen Hatke Aro, president of Accounting Aid. "In order for Detroit and southeast Michigan to thrive, each person needs to be part of the economic solution, and we need everyone to be part of the growing economy."

Accounting Aid Society operates 23 tax sites in southeast Michigan during the tax season, and has five financial hubs offering tax help and other services that operate year-round. The agency's VITA serves families with total household incomes up to \$54,000, and individuals with incomes up to \$35,000. It also offers a free DIY online tax option with hotline support for those with incomes under \$62,000.

For more, visit www.accountingaidsociety.org.

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