

## Earn It! Keep It! Save It! - VITA Free Tax Campaign

United Way Silicon Valley is working to connect people to free tax preparation sites and access to the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) -- as well as other tax credits to help working families increase their incomes and create savings. This effort helps people with low-incomes to keep more of their hard-earned money by avoiding unnecessary fees for commercial tax preparation and high-interest predatory "rapid refund" loans. The money returned to these individuals and families through the EITC and child care tax credits is critical in helping them meet basic needs and achieve a level of financial stability. Here in Santa Clara County, United Way Silicon Valley is a leading partner in the Bay Area-wide effort of EITC coalition work called Earn It! Keep It! Save It! -- which brings together community-based organizations, public and government agencies and financial institutions.

For Tax Year 2010, volunteers at 37 VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) locations helped more than 5,700 lower income Silicon Valley families prepare and file their tax returns for free -- and received over \$7.1M in federal refunds, which includes \$2.4M in Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) and child care tax credits. However, thousands more of eligible families were not able to take advantage of this service because they do not know about it and/or there are not enough volunteers. Our goal for Tax Year 2011 is to assist an additional 500 families and bring several million dollars more into the community. **Volunteer recruitment efforts are underway and we NEED you!**

### Why is the Earned Income Tax Credit important?

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal tax benefit for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. Working families can get as much as \$5,670 back in tax refunds. These substantial tax credits can be the first step in helping families meet their every needs, as well as save towards higher education, starting a new business or buying a first home. This is money that can make a real difference in people's lives.

### What services are available at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites?

- Free, quality tax preparation and electronic filing
- Assistance in signing up for certain public benefits
- Help for immigrants (multilingual services and applications for tax payer identification numbers)
- Information and referral to credit and debt counseling services, financial education, homeownership counseling, food assistance, individual development accounts, etc.

### How can I help?

Volunteer. The Campaign needs more than 200 volunteers to help prepare taxes or assist at the sites. Volunteers receive free training and IRS certification. Training sessions begin in November and run through December. Sponsor the campaign. Give a financial gift or in-kind donation of computer equipment and printers to support the campaign's success.

You can volunteer as a tax preparer or fill another important role at one of the coalition sites. You will receive professional IRS training as a tax assistor, tax reviewer, greeter and/or interpreter. As a volunteer tax assistor or reviewer you will need to complete a free training course to get your IRS certification before tax season begins. Once trained, all volunteers will be asked to commit time from late January through April 15<sup>th</sup> to volunteer during the 13 week tax season. You can register for the training that coincides with your interest and availability.

Please contact us at [taxvolunteer@uwsv.org](mailto:taxvolunteer@uwsv.org) or 408-345-4311 to sign up.

**EarnIt!KeepIt!\$aveIt!**