

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

UNITED WAY OF SALT LAKE

United Way 2-1-1 is Utah's Best Resource for Tax Assistance

SALT LAKE CITY — United Way 2-1-1 is Utah's most comprehensive resource for health and human services. But for the first few months of the year, the information network also becomes Utah's most comprehensive resource for tax assistance. And even though tax season is coming to an end, it's not too late to dial this simple three-digit number to take advantage of these amazing services.

As the primary point of entry to VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), Utah's free tax service, United Way 2-1-1 schedules the appointments that allow people to file their taxes with volunteers who are trained and certified by the IRS.

United Way 2-1-1 receives approximately 12,000 tax-related calls during each tax season. Through appointments scheduled by 2-1-1, VITA was able to file 16,563 returns in 2012, giving Utahns nearly \$24.5 million in refunds. The service also helps people understand what tax credits they may qualify for, such as Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. For many callers, this is the first they have heard of these opportunities.

Last year, United Way 2-1-1 and VITA helped Utahns receive nearly \$8.8 million in Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). But this is a shockingly small amount considering that an estimated \$103 million of EITC goes unclaimed each year by eligible taxpayers in Utah.

“Our goal is to help more hard working people receive the refunds they deserve, and to help them maximize the successful use of that credit,” said Amy Bosworth, Director of United Way 2-1-1.

United Way 2-1-1 specialists will also explain that anyone who makes less than \$51,000 is eligible to have his or her taxes prepared by VITA for free. If you make between \$51,000 and \$57,000, United Way 2-1-1 can recommend other discounted or self-prepared tax resources, which can save hundreds of dollars that might be paid to a private tax-preparer.

Beyond its invaluable tax referrals and resources, United Way 2-1-1 is dedicated to connecting callers to other services that are complementary to their tax needs, including income-planning classes, low-cost checking and savings accounts, and more. In some cases, specialists connect callers to basic services they may need while waiting for a tax return, such as access to a food pantry, information about rent assistance or help with utilities.

For more information about United Way 2-1-1 and VITA, contact Amy Bosworth, Director of United Way 2-1-1 at 801-746-2576 or amyb@uw.org. Information can also be found at www.uw.org/211 or www.utahtaxhelp.org.

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United Way of Salt Lake is working to advance the education, income, and health of our neighborhoods and communities to ensure that every child succeeds, every step of the way, from cradle to career. We invite everyone to be a part of the change. You can give, you can advocate, and you can volunteer. That's what it means to LIVE UNITED. Join the conversation by visiting our blog at uwslh.org, or find out more at uw.org.