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press@dca.nyc.gov

TIME TO FILE INCOME TAX RETURNS – TENS OF THOUSANDS OF NEW YORKERS CAN DO IT FOR FREE!

NYC has nearly 200 sites to help prepare returns for eligible taxpayers at no cost. At a day-long event taxpayers also learn how to claim money-saving tax credits

NEW YORK, NY—City, state, and federal consumer advocates, backed by dedicated volunteers, gathered in Brooklyn today to kick off the tax season and spread the word that tens of thousands of taxpayers in the five boroughs can file their income tax returns for free at one of the city's nearly 200 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance ([VITA](#)) sites. The VITA program, an IRS initiative, provides free tax preparation to individuals and families with an annual income of \$53,000 or less (with children) or \$18,000 or less (no children).

Free Tax Prep and More Resource Fair

At a day-long event sponsored by the Office of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, New Yorkers learned about the City's network of nearly 200 free tax sites, refund-boosting tax credits and other financial empowerment resources available to low and moderate income families and individuals in New York City. The event was hosted at the VITA site operated by Food Bank For New York City at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. Taxpayers were able to gather information in-person on a number of community-related programs and services, such as free, financial counseling and SaveUSA, an incentivized tax time savings program, from the event's co-sponsors, including:

- *Julie Menin, Commissioner of New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA):*
"With credits like EITC, a tax refund can be the largest one-time sum a family receives in a year, which can be pivotal in helping them pay bills, get out of debt and save for their future. We have committed a nearly 20-fold increase in funding to the tax credit campaign because we believe every working New Yorker deserves to get their hard-earned refund."
- *Nonie Manion, Executive Deputy Commissioner of New York State Department of Taxation and Finance:*
"For many families the most important financial transaction of the year is filing an income tax return. So it's important to get that return prepared by someone who knows what they're doing, someone who knows the rules, which is certainly the case when you call on well-trained, accuracy-minded volunteers staffing the city's 200 VITA locations."

- Mark Pursley, Regional Director of Stakeholder Partnership, Education and Communication at the Internal Revenue Service:*
 “The EITC credit is 40 years old and 2015 represents our ninth annual EITC Awareness Day campaign to capture the attention of those eligible for this potential life-changing tax credit and to motivate them to explore if they qualify. At the same time, we want to encourage taxpayers to check for additional refundable tax credits they are entitled to and make sure they get all of them right.”
- Margarette Purvis, President and CEO of Food Bank For New York City:*
 “Today we highlight important support programs for working New Yorkers. The EITC and our financial services program not only serve individuals who need it most, these programs are serving the community. Tax benefits help New Yorkers put food on the table while boosting the local economy to foster growth and job creation. We are proud to partner with so many steadfast supporters to help us provide these crucial tools toward that end.”
- Colvin Grannum, President and CEO of Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation:*
 "We are thrilled to be the launch site for tax preparation season," says Colvin Grannum, President and CEO of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. "For nearly 50 years, we have worked to support Brooklyn's communities on the path to financial stability. As families come in to prepare their taxes, we can also offer them support services including access to benefits, jobs and financial counseling."

Free Tax Preparation

The city's VITA services include traditional VITA sites where returns are prepared by IRS-certified volunteers with filers and convenient drop-off sites where filers can drop off their tax documents and return later to file the completed return. DCA also offers free self preparation online at visiting [nyc.gov/taxprep](http://www.nyc.gov/taxprep) (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/taxprep>) . Last year, more than 96,000 returns were filed using the city's services, a total of approximately \$170.6 million in refund and tax preparation fee savings. This year, DCA has committed to spending almost 20 times on the city's public awareness campaign and is, for the first time, funding the VITA sites with a goal of increasing the number of New Yorkers who use the City's free tax preparation services by approximately 50 percent.

New Yorkers can find a nearby VITA location by calling 311, visiting [nyc.gov/taxprep](http://www.nyc.gov/taxprep) (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/taxprep>) and using its new searchable map, or by using the [IRS online locator](http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Find-a-Location-for-Free-Tax-Prep) (link to: <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Find-a-Location-for-Free-Tax-Prep>). The filing deadline is April 15th.

Tax Credits

VITA volunteers help taxpayers receive all the state, city and federal tax credits for which they are eligible – credits that can mean thousands of dollars and provide financial stability for working individuals and families. They include:

- The **Earned Income Tax Credit**, a federal, state, and New York City tax credit for qualifying families, non-custodial parents, or singles who work full time or part time or are self-employed. For working families, when combined, the credit could be worth up to \$8,293.
- The **New York City Child Care Tax Credit**, available to help families pay for child care expenses. For those earning \$30,000 or less and pay child care expenses for children up to the age of four, they may qualify for the local tax credit of up to \$1,733.

There are a number of other income tax credits that could reduce a taxpayer's tax liability and result in a larger refund. They are detailed on the [New York State Tax Department](http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/credits/income_tax_credits.htm) (link to: http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/credits/income_tax_credits.htm) website.