



Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 3, 2017

Free tax assistance available at multiple locations in county

SARASOTA COUNTY — Free tax aid is available at locations throughout Sarasota County for quick filing of federal individual income tax returns at AARP tax aid sites and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. The VITA sites are operated by the United Way Suncoast.

Residents who earned \$64,000 or less last year can use the VITA tax aid sites in Sarasota County. The United Way Suncoast also is offering free online tax preparation for people who want to file their own taxes. The website is www.myfreetaxes.com.

There are no income limits or age limits at the AARP sites. This service is not for business returns or complex tax issues.

The United Way is operating five sites in Sarasota County, and AARP has twelve sites. No reservations are needed at any of the sites. The goal of the free tax aid programs is to help lower income tax payers get the refunds and tax credits they are entitled to — quickly and accurately, and without having to pay fees to paid tax preparers. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the credits available to working adults, and can be a significant benefit to lower income families.

Both the AARP and VITA free tax sites allow residents to electronically file their tax returns so they can receive refunds — if eligible — sooner. Generally, a refund can be posted to a person's bank account within seven to 10 days after the visit to one of the AARP or VITA sites. Trained IRS-certified volunteers will be at each location to provide free personal income tax assistance to EITC-eligible residents and older adults (some guidelines apply). Services include responding to questions; assisting eligible persons, including older adults, in filing their taxes; and support in reporting and receiving the benefit of all available and eligible credits, including the EITC and Child Tax Credit.

Many people will qualify for the EITC for the first time because their income declined, their marital status changed, or they added children to their families. Families with three or more children also get an extra boost with a larger EITC this year.

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MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:

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The EITC can make life a little easier for workers struggling to make ends meet in today's tight economy — up to \$6,269 in earned income tax credits with three or more qualifying children. Yet, the Internal Revenue Service estimates one in five eligible taxpayers could miss out on this valuable tax credit.

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Persons who earned \$53,505 or less from wages or self-employment in 2016 are encouraged to see if they qualify. Eligible taxpayers can get their EITC only if they file federal income tax returns – even if they are not otherwise required to file – and specifically claim the credit.

Taxpayers should bring the following to help determine their EITC eligibility and to help prepare their tax returns:

- photo identification
- valid Social Security cards for the taxpayer, spouse and dependents
- birth dates for primary, secondary and dependents on the tax return
- current year's tax package, if received
- wage and earning statement(s) Forms W-2, W-2G or 1099-R from all employers
- 1095-A if you received credit from the healthcare.gov marketplace.
- interest and dividend statements from banks (Form 1099)
- Form 1098, mortgage interest/property tax information, if applicable
- a copy of last year's federal and state returns, if available
- bring a check (blank or voided)
- other relevant information about income and expenses
- total paid for day care
- day care provider's taxpayer identifying number.



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The Sarasota County Commission issued a proclamation declaring January 27 to be Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day. Since these tax credits also are generally spent locally, this helps to improve the county's economy. In addition, this valuable service helps older residents and middle-income and lower-income residents who either need assistance in filing their taxes or who need to consult on a tax issue.

For more information, including a link to online EITC filing, visit the Sarasota County government website at www.scgov.net. If you do not have computer access, call 2-1-1 Suncoast by dialing 211 for more information. Those with mobile or pay phones should call 941-308-4357.

A list of locations follows.

There are no appointments except where noted, and walk-ins are welcome at all other locations. As of Feb. 1, the local AARP and VITA tax aid e-file sites and their hours are as follows:

SARASOTA

Mondays, 3-7 p.m.
Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (VITA site)
1845 34th St.

Mondays, 2:30-7 p.m. (except for Feb. 27 and April 3, which is 3-7 p.m.); Thursdays, 12:30-4 p.m.;
Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Closed Monday, Feb. 20, for Presidents Day
Gulf Gate Library (AARP Site)
7112 Curtiss Ave.

Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Boys and Girls Club (VITA site)
3100 Fruitville Road

Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Closed Monday, Feb. 20, for Presidents Day
Fruitville Library (AARP Site)
100 Coburn Road

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SARASOTA

Tuesdays, 2-6 p.m.
United Way Suncoast Sarasota Area Office (VITA site)
1800 2nd St. (Osprey Street Entrance)

Mondays -Thursdays, 2-6 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Closed Monday, Feb. 20, for Presidents Day
Selby Library (AARP Site)
1331 First St.

Tuesdays AND Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Friendship Center (AARP Site)
1888 Brother Geenen Way

VENICE

Wednesdays, 4-8 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Sky Family Y (VITA site), Venice Branch boardroom
701 Center Road

Fridays, 1-4 p.m.
Bay Indies Park (AARP Site)
950 Ridgewood Ave.

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Closed Monday, Feb. 20, for Presidents Day
Jacaranda Library (AARP Site)
4143 Woodmere Blvd.

Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Venice Community Center (AARP Site)
326 S. Nokomis Ave.

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VENICE

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Woodmere Park (AARP Site)
3951 Woodmere Park Blvd.

NORTH PORT

Thursdays, 5-8:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
North Port Family Service Center, Social Services (VITA site)
6919 Outreach Way

Mondays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Holiday Park Recreation Center (AARP Site)
5401 Holiday Park Blvd.

Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Fridays, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
North Port Senior Center (AARP Site)
4940 Pan American Blvd.

Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
San Pedro Activity Center (AARP Site)
14380 Tamiami Trail

ENGLEWOOD

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 12:30-4:30 p.m.
(By appointment only, to be scheduled at front desk)
Closed Monday, Feb. 20, for Presidents Day
Elsie Quirk Library (AARP Site)
100 West Dearborn St.

Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.
View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx



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In September 2011, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released information about the Registered Tax Return Preparer competencies for those who prepare tax returns for individuals and families. For more information, visit <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/index.html>

The IRS is delaying the refunds this year as part of the new law implemented to decreased tax fraud. <https://www.irs.gov/uac/newsroom/2017-tax-filing-season-opens-today>

The IRS is not providing the usual level of tax forms and instructions to libraries this year because of significant federal budget cuts. Tax forms can be delivered by mail via www.irs.gov/orderforms or by calling 800-829-3676. Tax forms can also be downloaded from the IRS website, www.irs.gov/forms.

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AARP/Tax Aide Program Contacts:

Mike Roberts, North County AARP/Tax Aide; 941-544-1023; mrmrskate@aol.com

Herman Baker, Venice AARP/Tax Aide; 941-492-4764; baker.herman@gmail.com

Duane Hetzel, North Port/Eglewood AARP/Tax Aide; 941-423-5477; chanddh1@gmail.com

United Way VITA Program Contacts:

Holly Bullard, United Way Suncoast, Inc. VITA Program Manager; 941-328-6978 hbullard@uwsuncoast.org



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