

Feb. 4, 2014



## 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 \$52,000 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 <http://myfreetaxes.com/sarasota>. The income limit for online tax preparation support is \$58,000.

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 Suncoast will operate five VITA sites in Sarasota County as part of a coordinated effort between the United Way's Financial Stability Partnership and the Sarasota County Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Task Force. The goal is to help ensure that residents who are eligible for the various tax credits receive their earned share. The other 11 tax aid sites will be operated by the AARP foundation. There are no appointments at the AARP or VITA sites.

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. The EITC can make life a little easier for workers struggling to make ends meet in today's tight economy — up to \$6,044 in earned income tax credits. Yet, the Internal Revenue Service estimates one in four eligible taxpayers could miss out on this valuable tax credit.

### SARASOTA COUNTY MEDIA RELATIONS

**CURT PREISSER**

desk 941-861-5884

cell 941-650-2883

[cpreisse@scgov.net](mailto:cpreisse@scgov.net)

**JAMIE CARSON**

desk 941-861-5451

cell 804-873-3202

[jcarson@scgov.net](mailto:jcarson@scgov.net)

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Persons who earned \$52,000 or less from wages or self-employment in 2013 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
- 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
- bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit
- other relevant information about income and expenses
- total paid for day care
- day care provider's taxpayer identifying number.

The Sarasota County Commission will issue a proclamation recognizing February as Sarasota County Tax Credit Awareness Month. 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](http://www.scgov.net). If you do not have computer access, call United Way 2-1-1 of Manasota Inc. by dialing 211 for more information. Those with mobile or pay phones should call 941-308-4357.

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A list of locations follows.

There are no appointments, but walk-ins are welcome at all 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.

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

Mondays-Thursdays, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. (AARP Site)  
Fruitville Library  
100 Coburn Road

Tuesdays, 2 – 6 p.m.  
United Way Suncoast Sarasota Area Office (VITA site)  
1800 2<sup>nd</sup> St. (Osprey Street Entrance)

Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.; Fridays, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (AARP Site)  
St. Thomas More Catholic Church.  
2056 Gulf Gate Drive

Mondays-Thursdays, 2 – 6 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
Selby Library (AARP Site)  
1331 First St.

Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. \*Last return will be started at 1 p.m. (AARP Site)  
Senior Friendship Center  
1888 Brother Geenen Way

**VENICE**

Wednesdays, 4 – 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
South County Family YMCA (VITA site), Venice Branch boardroom  
701 Center Road

Fridays, 1– 4:30 p.m. (AARP Site)  
Bay Indies Park  
950 Ridgewood Ave.

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Mondays, 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (AARP Site)  
Closed Monday, Feb. 17, for Presidents Day  
Jacaranda Library  
4143 Woodmere Blvd.

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

Mondays, 1 – 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (AARP Site)  
Woodmere Park  
3951 Woodmere Park Blvd.

### **NORTH PORT**

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

Mondays, 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (AARP Site)  
Holiday Park Recreation Center (Recreation Hall)  
5401 Holiday Park Blvd.

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

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

### **ENGLEWOOD**

Mondays, 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Fridays, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.;  
Saturdays, 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. (except for March 1 when assistance will be 3 – 4:30 p.m.)  
(AARP Site)  
Elsie Quirk Library  
100 West Dearborn St.

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***MEDIA NOTES:***

**DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:**

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; [Dianne.Shipley@flhealth.gov](mailto:Dianne.Shipley@flhealth.gov)

**AARP/Tax Aide Program Contacts:**

Mike Roberts, North County AARP/Tax Aide; 941-544-1023; [mrmrskate@aol.com](mailto:mrmrskate@aol.com)

Duane Hetzel, South County AARP/Tax Aide; 941-423-5477; [chanddh1@gmail.com](mailto:chanddh1@gmail.com)

**United Way VITA Program Contacts:**

Art Keckeissen, United Way Suncoast, Inc. VITA Program Manager; 941-328-6978

[akeckeissen@uwsuncoast.org](mailto:akeckeissen@uwsuncoast.org)

**MEDIA NOTE:** 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>.

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