

SCGOVNEWS

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NEWSROOM

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

Jan. 24, 2013

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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>. Also, the locations of tax aid sites are at the end of this release.

Free tax aid offered to help people file for valuable tax credits

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 \$51,000 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 \$57,000.

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 four 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 12 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 \$5,891 in earned income tax credits. Yet, the Internal Revenue Service estimates one in four eligible taxpayers could miss out on this valuable tax credit.

Persons who earned \$51,000 or less from wages or self-employment in 2012 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 issued 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. 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.

There are no appointments, but walk-ins are welcome at all locations. Local AARP and VITA tax aid e-file sites and their hours are as follows:

SARASOTA

Tuesdays, 4-7:30 p.m. (Open Feb. 5-April 9)
Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (VITA site)
1845 34th St.

Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Opens Feb. 2)
North Sarasota Library
2801 Newtown Blvd.

Mondays-Thursdays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (Opens Feb. 4)
Fruitville Library
100 Coburn Road

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3-8 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Open Jan. 31-April 13)
United Way Suncoast Sarasota Area Office (VITA site)
1445 2nd St.

Wednesdays 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; Fridays 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
St. Thomas More Catholic Church. .
The Chelsea Center
2056 Gulf Gate Drive

Monday-Thursday, 2-6 p.m. (Opens Feb. 4)
Selby Library
1331 First St.

Tuesdays, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. *Last return will be started at 2 p.m. (Opens Feb. 5)
Senior Friendship Center
1888 Brother Geenen Way

VENICE

Wednesdays 4-8 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Open Jan. 30-April 13)
South County Family YMCA (VITA site), Venice Branch boardroom
701 Center Road

Fridays, 1-4:30 p.m. (Opens Feb. 1)
Bay Indies Park
950 Ridgewood Ave.

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. (Opens Feb. 4)
Closed Monday, Feb. 21, for Presidents Day
Jacaranda Library
4143 Woodmere Blvd.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.; Thursdays, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. (Opens Feb. 5)
Venice Community Center
326 S. Nokomis Ave.

Thursdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (Opens Feb. 7)
Woodmere Park
3951 Woodmere Park Blvd.

NORTH PORT

Thursdays, 5-8:30 p.m.; and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Open Jan. 31-April 13)
North Port Family Service Center, Social Services (VITA site)
6919 Outreach Way

Mondays, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (Opens Feb. 4)
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. (Opens Feb. 1)
North Port Senior Center
4940 Pan American Blvd.

Thursdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (Opens Feb. 7)
San Pedro Activity Center
14380 Tamiami Trail