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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Free Tax Preparation Service Now Taking Appointments

Valley VITA opens its doors February 1st at three tax site locations next week where IRS certified volunteers will provide FREE tax preparation service for households whose income is \$54,000 or less. Tax payers can file their taxes in three easy and convenient ways: schedule an appointment at one of the sites, complete a short intake interview and drop off their return, or file on their own utilizing www.myfreetaxes.com. Tax site locations include Booker T. Washington Community Center, Stuart's Draft High School, and United Way of Greater Augusta. To schedule a tax preparation appointment, call **540-221-1654**.

Valley VITA volunteers have helped over 750 community members file returns last year, saving clients over \$150,000 in fees. Volunteers, comprised of Community members and Mary Baldwin University student, complete an IRS supported training program, and have donated 4,000 hours to support this program since the beginning. In addition, volunteers help ensure that community members receive money they've earned through valuable federal programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. Valley VITA will be accepting tax preparation appointments and tax sites will remain open through the beginning of April.

Paul Vaughan, Community Investment Manager for Valley VITA partner the United Way of Greater Augusta, says "volunteers are trained with IRS supported programs and materials, and we are able to make connections with area financial literacy, education, and family support services increasing opportunity and reducing the barriers to financial independence faced by some customers."

For a full schedule of tax site locations and hours, please visit <https://www.unitedwayga.org/valley-vita>. Follow us on Facebook for weather related closings, volunteer highlights and financial education information at <https://www.facebook.com/ValleyVITA>.

About the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program helps families by using volunteers that will be preparing tax returns for clients for free, because many people cannot afford to pay for this service. The Earned Income Tax Credit, one of the largest anti-poverty programs in the U.S. and the Child Tax Credit lifted more than 10.1 million people out of poverty, half of them children in 2014. Unfortunately, up to 10 billion dollars goes unclaimed each tax season. Collaborative partners include: Community Action Partnership of Staunton Augusta Waynesboro (CAPSAW), United Way of Greater Augusta, City of Staunton Recreation and Parks and IT departments, Stuarts Draft High School, Augusta County Schools, DuPont Community Credit Union, and many others.

About United Way of Greater Augusta

United Way of Greater Augusta is part of a national network of more than 1,300 locally governed organizations that work to create lasting positive changes in communities and people's lives. Building on more than a century of service as the nation's preeminent community-based fundraiser, United Way engages the community to identify the underlying causes of the most significant local issues, develops strategies and pulls together financial and human resources to address them, and measures the results. United Way of Greater Augusta tackle issues based on local needs. Common focus areas include helping children and youth succeed, improving access to health care, promoting self-sufficiency, and strengthening families. For more information about United Way of Greater Augusta, please visit: www.unitedwayga.org.