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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Valley VITA offers FREE tax preparation to local community

Valley VITA opens its doors this week at three tax site locations where IRS certified volunteers provided 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.

Anna Leavitt, Director of the Community Action Partnership of Staunton, Augusta, Waynesboro (CAPSAW) one of Valley VITA's collaborative partners says, "Valley VITA puts real dollars back into the budgets of area residents. The Valley VITA program is important because it helps create greater financial stability and the chance of a stronger community by offering a high quality free service to families who otherwise pay out of pocket to file taxes. Families can use the money they save to meet their own financial goals." Valley VITA volunteers have helped over 2,000 community members file returns resulting in over \$2.9 million in federal and state refunds saving clients over \$400,000 in fees since 2011.

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. 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 April 14th.

Paul Vaughan, Community Investment Manager for Valley VITA partner the United Way of Greater Augusta, emphasizes the important role volunteers play in the success of this program. Vaughan 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>.