

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Free Tax Prep for Working Families and Individuals Making Less than \$59,187 a Year

Program runs from February 1 through April 18

(WESTCHESTER) February 7, 2023—The Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board (WPWDB) kicked-off its “Volunteer Income Tax Assistance” (VITA) Program on Friday, February 3, 2023 at the Mt. Vernon Career Center.

The VITA program, which runs February 1 to April 18, helps low- and moderate-income individuals and families eligible for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) file their taxes for free, including people with disabilities, senior citizens, and those for whom English is a second language. To make sure the program delivers maximum benefits, VITA relies on dedicated volunteers to act as greeters, and assist with translation and call-center operations. Tax preparation is done by IRS-certified volunteers with FREE electronic filing.

Westchester County Executive **George Latimer** stated, “What started as a small program in 1969 to help the IRS increase taxpayer education has evolved into a critical resource for low- and moderate-income taxpayers. Today, the VITA program helps ensure accurate tax returns and equitable access to the tax code and its many benefits. VITA is designed to help working families and individuals, but also serves to boost the local economy as it’s estimated that about 80% of refunds are spent locally, generating sales, wages and jobs.”

Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard said: “We are proud to provide our hard-working residents access to free tax prep services they can trust and rely on right in their local community. We thank all the IRS certified volunteers for their time and talent.”

Westchester County Department of Social Services (DSS) **Commissioner Leonard Townes** said: “Tax time is stressful, and even relatively simple tax filings can be confusing to someone who is not a tax expert. Worse, as we’ve recently learned from the news, inadvertent errors in claims relating to programs like the Earn Income Tax Credit, designed to help lower income filers, are often used to trigger audits. Thanks to the VITA program, people who can’t afford to hire an accountant or a tax lawyer can still get the quality, expert help they deserve. We urge everyone who is eligible to take advantage of this excellent program.”

The program is delivered through a collaboration of partners who work diligently to coordinate the day-to-day appointments and operations—United Way 2-1-1, Volunteer NY, WestCOP, AARP, the IRS, Westchester County Government, Westchester Community College, Westchester Education Opportunity Center, Mercy College Westchester and Bronx Campus, Ossining High School, and the Westchester-Putnam Career Center Network.

Call 211 or 1-800-899-1479 to make an appointment at one of six locations. Volunteer tax preparer and Spanish translator assistance runs from February 1 through April 18 and is available at the sites below. Call 211 or (800) 899-1479 to make an appointment at one of the Westchester County VITA/EITC Tax Assistance locations.



PHOTO CAPTION:

L–R: **Tamicka Hall**, Volunteer Tax Preparer; **OJ Yizar**, Career Center Manager; **Thom Kleiner**, WPWDB Executive Director; **Hon. George Latimer**, Westchester County Executive; **Hon. Shawyn Patterson-Howard**, Mayor, City of Mt. Vernon; **Leonard Townes**, Westchester County DSS Commissioner; **Linda McKinzie-Daugherty**, Program Specialist & VITA Coordinator; **Victor Avendano**, Program Administrator & Former VITA Coordinator; **Randolf A. Scott**, Westchester County DSS Deputy Commissioner.

THE WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WPWDB) is comprised of leaders and staff of state and county government agencies, non-profits, public education, and the private sector who work together to strengthen the partnerships between business, education, and service providers within the “Career Center Network” to meet the needs for a skilled workforce. The WPWDB pursues funding opportunities and develops model programs and leading-edge practices. The “Network” is made up of four Career Centers (White Plains, Mount Vernon, Peekskill, and Carmel) as well as partner agencies that provide state-of-the-art technology, training, resources, and services to youth, adults and employers. For more information, visit www.westchesterputnamonestop.com.

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