

**United Way of Lackawanna County • 615 Jefferson Ave. • PO Box 526
Scranton, PA 18501-0526 • 570.343.1267 • 570.969.2977 (fax) • www.uwlc.net**

Wayne County Division • PO Box 328 • Waymart, PA 18472



Contact: Nikki Keller,
VP of Community Impact Marketing
343.1267 x237 (office)
nkeller@uwlc.net

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 14, 2008**

Please note: *Members of the media are encouraged to visit tax preparation sites to talk with volunteers and program participants. To arrange a visit, please contact Nikki Keller at 343-1267 x 237 or via email at nkeller@uwlc.net.*

Local Organizations Offer Free Help Filing Taxes

Scranton, PA (February 14, 2008) – Low and moderate income individuals, families and senior citizens in the Abingtons can receive free assistance in completing and filing their federal, state and local tax returns through the University of Scranton’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and a group of local human service organizations led by the United Way of Lackawanna County. This year, a financial education component has been added to the program to help area families build assets.

The program is available by appointment only at the Abington Area Community Library (1200 Grove St., Clarks Summit) on Thursday, February 21 from Noon – 4 p.m.; Monday, March 3 from 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. and Monday, March 24 from 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. To schedule an appointment, call Lisa Durkin at 343-8835 x108.

“Many people find filing their taxes to be a complicated and intimidating process,” noted Gary Drapek, president of the United Way of Lackawanna County. “This program eliminates the frustration, helps these families and individuals hold onto the money they have worked so hard to earn and connects them with crucial asset-building resources to help them take ownership of their financial futures.”

The United Way of Lackawanna County is joined on the Tax Assistance Committee by the University of Scranton’s VITA program as well as Catholic Social Services, United Neighborhood Centers, the Voluntary Action Center and Consumer Credit Counseling of NEPA. Since its onset in 2003, this partnership has helped hundreds of area families and individuals receive every tax benefit available to them, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC).

(MORE)

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Tax Filing Assistance 2-2-2-2

The EIC is a special tax benefit for low and moderate income wage earners that work full or part time. Workers who meet the federal income guidelines can receive a maximum of more than \$4,716 with the average benefit as much as \$1,500. In addition, families with dependent children may qualify for the Child Tax Credit worth up to an additional \$1,000 for each qualifying child.

In 2007, 707 tax returns were completed through this collaborative program of the United Way, resulting in \$204,633.00 in funds returned to individuals and families through the EIC program. The average return per eligible individual in EIC was approximately \$289.44.

“We have conservatively estimated that more than one million dollars goes unclaimed in Lackawanna County alone each year in EIC dollars,” Mr. Drapek said. “For people on fixed or limited incomes, every dollar counts. Through this program, we urge people to get the maximum tax benefit they have coming to them.”

This year’s program runs from February 12- April 4. In addition to the dates scheduled at the Abington Area Community Library, appointments are also available in four other locations (Carbondale, Peckville, Taylor and Daleville) throughout Lackawanna County. Walk-in service with no appointment required is available on a first-come, first served basis on the first floor of the University of Scranton’s Brennan Hall, and a Spanish-speaking interpreter service is available by appointment only at this location. For a complete schedule at all six locations, please visit uwlc.net or call the United Way of Lackawanna County at 343-1267. Additionally, tax clients comfortable using the Internet can file their own taxes online for free. Call the United Way at 343-1267 for more information.

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Tax Filing Assistance 3-3-3-3

Tax clients need to bring:

- Valid photo identification
- All W2 and 1099 documents
- Social Security Numbers or Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITIN) for you, yourself and all dependents including children.
- Completed W-7 documents as appropriate
- Last year's return (optional, but helpful)
- Any records relating to income and expenses
- Personal bank account information (for direct deposit in bank account)
- Real estate tax receipts (if appropriate)

For a complete schedule and list of required documents, please contact the United Way at 343-1267 or visit uwlc.net.

This program is the cornerstone of the United Way's Financial Stability Partnership designed to help hard-working families become more self-sufficient by building assets and making wise fiscal decisions to help ensure a more stable financial future.