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Free Tax Preparation Available through Rappahannock United Way

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In 2010, Judith Vanga was worried about how she would file her taxes. Newly divorced, the Fredericksburg resident went from being married with a six-plus figure joint income to making \$22,000 a year before taxes. Financially unable to pay for someone to prepare her taxes, Judith found another solution.

“I went online to the IRS website and found that Rappahannock United Way could help me and that the service was free. When I showed up, I was immediately greeted warmly and given information on what to do. The gentleman that helped me was patient and knowledgeable and made sure that I understood everything. Throughout the process, I felt that he took pride in what he was doing by helping me, and I was grateful for that.”

Volunteer Tax Sites are part of the largest anti-poverty program in our nation, bringing an estimated \$1 billion into the homes of low-to-moderate-income working families. Locally, the Rappahannock Region Financial Stability Coalition tackles financial stability, led by Rappahannock United Way (RUW). Rappahannock United Way organizes and trains volunteers to prepare taxes for free to community members who make \$50,000 a year or less.

During the 2011 tax season, volunteers filed 902 tax returns in Planning District 16, with the total refunds for these individuals and families amounting to \$1.18 million. Because these taxpayers chose the Coalition's free tax preparation, they collectively saved \$170,000 on preparation fees. This money could instead go toward paying bills, reducing debt, paying for an education, building savings, or even buying a car to have a lasting impact on the lives of community members.

All services are provided by volunteers under the guidance of IRS-certified staff and volunteers. Jim Foster, the Tax Site Coordinator for Rappahannock United Way, leads his volunteers with pride, ensuring they treat clients warmly and with respect.

Judith experienced the helpful attitude and patience of the staff and volunteers. “I had not gotten my new social security card in the mail yet, and [my volunteer] spoke with Mr. Jim Foster. Mr. Foster reassured me that everything would be OK and advised me to get an official letter from the social security office the next day and then fax him the letter. Mr. Foster gave me his card and told me to call him the next day once I had gotten the letter so that he could be there to receive the fax.” Varga adds, “I felt that they genuinely cared about what they were doing.”

Because of the impact the taxes services program made on her life, Judith returned to have her taxes prepared in 2011. “By having my taxes prepared by Rappahannock

United Way I didn't have to stress over one more issue. I had been going through a lot of stress because of the divorce and I am sure that it showed when I walked in. I walked out feeling relieved that not only were my taxes done but I didn't have to try and figure out how I was going to pay for having my taxes prepared on top of owing the government.”

Varga added, “I would definitely recommend the tax services to anyone that qualifies.”

Tax preparation begins Monday, January 16 and runs through Tuesday, April 17, 2012. See below for a listing of weekly dates and times. For a more complete listing, visit www.rappahannockunitedway.org/taxservices_locations.html.

Mondays	Central Rappahannock Regional Library , England Run Branch, 5pm-8pm, 806 Lyons Boulevard, Fredericksburg
Tuesdays	Central Rappahannock Regional Library , Main Branch, 5pm-8pm, 1201 Caroline Street, Fredericksburg
Wednesdays	Rappahannock United Way, 1pm-5pm, 3310 Shannon Park Drive, Fredericksburg Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Porter Branch, 5pm-8pm, 2001 Parkway Boulevard, Stafford
Saturdays	Rappahannock United Way, 10am-5pm, 3310 Shannon Park Drive, Fredericksburg

*Taxpayers must bring necessary documentation to receive assistance filing taxes:

- Driver’s License or Photo Identification Card
- Social Security card or Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) for taxpayer and all dependents
- Copies of all W2, 1098, 1099 forms
- Amounts of any other income
- Childcare provider's name, address, and tax identification number
- Amounts and dates of any estimated or other tax payments made.
- Notice CP1378 or the amount of Economic Stimulus Payment received
- Spouse in person, if filing jointly
- Proof of account for direct deposit of refund (voided check)

For more information, visit www.rappahannockunitedway.org/taxservices.html or call Rappahannock United Way at (540) 373-0041 ext. 316.

About Rappahannock United Way: Founded in 1939, Rappahannock United Way is a local nonprofit organization serving the city of Fredericksburg, and the counties of Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania and Stafford. Rappahannock United Way is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income and health. These are the building blocks for a good life—a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and good health. Our goal is to create long-lasting changes that prevent problems from happening in the first place.

We invite our community to be part of the change. Together, united, we can inspire hope and create opportunities for a better tomorrow. That's what it means to LIVE UNITED.