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FREE TAX PREPARATION SERVICE IS ALREADY IMPACTING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Fredericksburg, VA, February 20, 2014 –

The last few Wednesdays and Saturdays the community room at the Rappahannock United Way (RUW) has been packed with community members getting their taxes prepared for free with the help of IRS certified tax volunteers.

“This is my 2nd year back. I love how close you are to my house and everyone’s so friendly”, said Ms. Davis, a 62-year-old woman from Fredericksburg, as she waited to work with a Volunteer Preparer. Ms. Davis explained that she’s never learned how to use a computer and before she found the RUW Free Tax Service Program she was paying a third party to file her taxes. *“I certainly like saving money,”* commented Ms. Davis, *“every little bit helps and it’s nice feeling like I was a part of the process instead of it just being done for me.”*

Many excited community members just like Ms. Davis are taking advantage of the Free Tax Service Program provided by RUW – a program that provides 3 free options for filing your taxes for households that earned less than \$58,000 in 2013.

The **first** option provided to tax payers is the full-service tax preparation. Individuals meet one-on-one with an IRS certified volunteer who helps them go through each line of their return. Volunteers help tax payers review their documents (such as W-2s), identify deductions, and determine whether or not they may qualify for tax credits. When completed, volunteers also help tax payers receive their e-filing pin from the IRS website and file their taxes electronically, ensuring the quickest possible return.

The **second** option gives tax payers the opportunity to file their taxes themselves on computers provided at a Free Tax Site and if needed receive guidance and oversight from a certified, volunteer tax preparer. This option is ideal for individuals who are familiar with computers and don’t have incredibly complicated returns.

“Honestly I’m glad that I tried filing my taxes by myself,” says Jessica, a 28-year-old mother from Fredericksburg. Jessica decided to try to file her taxes on her own with assistance so she didn’t have to wait for an available Tax Preparer Volunteer. *“I was scared at first, just because I’m really bad with numbers, but I was surprised how easy it was and whenever I had a question there was someone right there to help.”*

The **third** option provided by the program allows tax payers to file their taxes from the comfort of their own home for free at myfreetaxes.com/Fredericksburg. This option is great for people who are comfortable using a computer and are used to TurboTax or other similar online filing programs.

Two weeks into the program and RUW has already seen so many lives impacted and money saved.

- **\$637,207 in tax refunds and credits**
- **309 tax returns filed**
- **136 individuals EITC eligible - \$368,761 in EITC credits**
- **22 tax sites and events have been active to date**
- **55 individuals coached to complete their own tax returns on MyFreeTaxes.com**

Tax Payers are not just talking about how much money they save by having their taxes filed for free (usually an average of \$200), but they're also talking about how convenient the service is and how knowledgeable the Tax Volunteers are.

In addition to the Free Tax Preparation services provided at the tax sites Rappahannock United Way is also coordinating with local financial institutions to provide on-site financial coaches, who help individuals review their credit scores, organize spending habits and budget for savings.

"Individuals are receiving significant tax refunds and savings through this program," says Janel S. Donohue, President of Rappahannock United Way. "The participants are telling us that the tax refunds are allowing them the opportunity to catch up on bills, build a savings account or even invest in their education. All of these opportunities will ultimately help them be more financially stable. To help them in their effort to be more financially stable we are offering clients the opportunity to talk one on one with a professional who can help them access the information or resources they need."

Rappahannock United Way would like to stress that these free services, the Tax Service and Financial Coaching, are targeted to middle income households that earned up to \$58,000 in 2013. Anyone with an interest in becoming more financial stable is invited to attend one of the events and benefit from the services that are provided. Visit the website for a full schedule of events – www.ruwfreetaxes.org

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.