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## **UNITED WAY, PARTNERS GARNER \$23.3 MILLION FOR LOCAL FAMILIES**

Over \$23 million in tax refunds were returned to local families, thanks to the Regional Volunteer Tax Assistance Collaborative which provides free tax preparation services and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) outreach. Collaborative partners include United Way of Greater Cincinnati, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program, the Ohio Benefit Bank and the Internal Revenue Service.

More than 21,000 returns were prepared for local families at 93 sites across Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana – a 6 percent increase over last year.

“The Regional Volunteer Tax Assistance Collaborative is a tremendous help to families struggling to make ends meet,” says Lucy Crane, Community Impact Director, United Way of Greater Cincinnati. “Thousands of local families are more financially sound, thanks to this service. The EITC is our nation’s largest anti-poverty tool. It reduces the tax burden on low-wage workers, supplements wages, reduces income inequality, and helps families build assets.”

More than 700 trained, certified volunteers helped individuals and families file their income tax returns, receive refunds due to withholding, and determine whether they qualified for EITC and other tax credits. A free online program —MyFreeTaxes — is also offered for tax filers to file their own returns. Free tax preparation saved individuals and families an average of \$200 in tax preparation costs per return.

Many local companies supported the effort by volunteering, hosting and adopting tax preparation sites. Accounting firm EY recruited corporate volunteers and provided extensive training and support. GE Aviation hosted a site at St. John United Church of Christ, and Kroger hosted a site at the Houston Conference Center. Fifth Third Bank supported a site at the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency, and Park National Bank supported a site in Clermont County. New this year, Union Savings Bank adopted the Millvale Recreation Center site, doubling its services. Cincinnati State Technical and Community College and Gateway Community and Technical College each sponsored self-file sites on their campuses. Macy’s and IRS Cincinnati Service Center volunteers ran sites to assist their co-workers.

“Our free tax prep sites provide quality, accurate tax preparation services for those in the community who need them to file taxes, meet legal obligations and get the refunds they have earned,” said Crane. “We are grateful to individual volunteers and to the corporate groups provided by EY, GE, Kroger, Fifth Third, Park National, and Union Savings Bank, whose employees donated countless hours to help file returns at community sites.”

Non-profit organizations leading the work included Brighton Center; Center for Great Neighborhoods; four Community Action Agencies in Hamilton, Butler and Clermont Counties and in Northern Kentucky; Healing Center; Santa Maria community Services, and Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio. Thomas More College and Xavier University students also ran tax sites in city communities for the public.

Funders for the initiative include United Way of Greater Cincinnati, First Financial Bank, Internal Revenue Service, Key Bank, PNC Bank, Republic Bank, and SC Ministry Foundation.

Since United Way began participating in the EITC regional initiative, the collaborative has been instrumental in returning more than \$143 million to the community.

Limited tax preparation services will continue over the summer and fall for individuals needing to file after the deadline. This fall, United Way and its partners will begin recruiting and training volunteers for the 2017 tax season.

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### **About the Regional Volunteer Tax Assistance Collaborative**

The Regional Volunteer Tax Assistance Collaborative, led by [United Way of Greater Cincinnati](http://www.uwgc.org), is a coalition of business, nonprofit and government partners helping eligible wage earners in Southwestern Ohio, Northern Kentucky, and Southeastern Indiana receive quality tax preparation and wealth-building opportunities to strengthen their financial stability. Regional partners in delivering free tax preparation include VITA, the IRS, AARP, Ohio Benefit Bank and United Way. Learn more at [www.makeworkpay.org](http://www.makeworkpay.org).