



Contact:
Tami Kelly
United Way Bay Area
mediarelations@uwba.org
925-640-9997

Taxes Are Hard, United Way Volunteers Make It Easy

SAN FRANCISCO (November 1, 2017)—United Way Bay Area’s Earn It! Keep It! Save It! program is seeking volunteer tax preparers, interpreters and greeters to help staff our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites throughout the Bay Area during the 2018 tax season. With the support of trained, IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers, VITA sites provide free tax preparation to low to moderate income individuals and families at more than 200 locations throughout eight Bay Area counties. To volunteer, visit earnitkeepitsaveit.org/volunteer.

VITA volunteers help Bay Area households receive the best possible refunds by ensuring they claim all deductions and tax credits available. For example, the federal Earned Income Tax Credit—one of the most powerful poverty-fighting safety net programs in the country—can provide eligible families with three or more qualifying children a \$6,318 credit. Sites also provide support in helping families access the California Earned Income Tax Credit. The estimated average household benefit is more than \$400 per year with a maximum credit of almost \$3,000 for a family with three or more qualifying children.

“We’ve asked our volunteers what their number one reason for volunteering is and they all answer, ‘I want to help people and give back to my community,’” said Kelly Batson, vice president of program operations at United Way Bay Area. “We hear from our volunteers who come back year after year that there is something addictive about helping people with their taxes.”

Last year, almost 3,000 Earn It! Keep It! Save It! volunteers helped file more than 72,000 federal and state tax returns, bringing more than \$75 million in federal tax refunds back to the local Bay Area community. Since 2003, volunteers have facilitated more than half a billion dollars in refunds to Bay Area households—an estimated 80 percent of which is spent locally.

Free volunteer training provided by community partners and the IRS begins in December and January. Volunteer tax preparers are invited to attend three days of classroom instruction. New this year are outreach volunteer roles that require less training. For tax professionals or experienced volunteers, an online training and certification tool is available.

Site operation hours vary, but most volunteers are asked to volunteer regularly for at least one four-hour shift each week from late January until April 17, 2018. Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds are welcome. There is a special need for bilingual Spanish speakers.

“Volunteers are the heart of Earn It! Keep It! Save It!—thousands of people show up every tax season to connect with and give back to their community,” said Batson. “The amazing results are tens of thousands of tax returns prepared and millions of dollars returned to the pockets of working families. I can’t think of a more direct way to connect with and help your neighbors!”

Learn more: earnitkeepitsaveit.org/volunteer

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About United Way Bay Area

United Way Bay Area (UWBA) fights for financial stability and equal opportunity for residents in eight Bay Area counties. UWBA takes an innovative, holistic approach to ending the cycle of poverty through advocacy and programs that support all ages—providing free access to family support, financial and career coaching, job opportunities and basic needs. www.uwba.org

Learn more about United Way Bay Area: uwba.org