

## NEWS RELEASE

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United Way  
of Greater Stark County

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **United Way's VITA Program Ends a Record-Breaking Tax Season with Celebration, Awards**

*(Canton, OH) May 16, 2018* – United Way of Greater Stark County's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program celebrated their best tax season ever on April 26<sup>th</sup> with a celebration that included recognition of volunteers and an awards presentation. In 2018, United Way of Greater Stark County's VITA program and its volunteers helped income tax clients in local communities collect over \$3.2 million in tax credits and refunds. 112 local volunteers donated 2,114 hours of their time and helped complete 4,656 Federal and State returns so far. Tax returns will continue to be processed through October due to extensions and amendments.

"Every year, our VITA volunteers bring more money back into the community, which stimulates the local economy," says Robin Seemann, Income Impact Council Director of United Way of Greater Stark County. Because our volunteers receive specialized training from the Internal Revenue Service, they can find tax credits that may be overlooked by other tax assistance programs. This tax season they identified tax credits equaling \$1,163,647."

This year's Annual Tax-A-Thon took place on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. The event featured a "Pack the House" event between student volunteers from local universities. VITA also hosted a successful "Take Your Taxes for a Ride" drive-thru tax filing event on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Tax payers dropped off their tax information without leaving their vehicles. Their returns were processed and the paperwork was available for pick up in just a few days. Finnegan the VITA mascot was on hand, and participants received goody bags – some containing tickets entitling the bearer to prizes or gift certificates. "The drive-thru event allowed us to accommodate more people, and the chance of winning a prize made it fun for everyone," says Chrisann Leaman, Manager of United Way of Greater Stark County's Financial Prosperity Center (FPC) at OhioMeansJobs.

Voted one of the top 3 tax services in Stark County in the Canton Repository's Readers' Choice Awards for several years in a row, United Way of Greater Stark County's VITA Program was recently named the #1 Tax Site on Ohio Benefit Bank's "Sensational Sixteen" list. This designation is based upon the number of tax returns filed and amount of refunds received by taxpayers.

Additionally, The Internal Revenue Service has selected United Way of Greater Stark County's VITA Program as an official site for training other VITA organizations. This qualification is based upon the consistent increase in processed returns, receiving a 100% score on multiple audits and the fact that other budgeting services are offered to VITA clients through the FPC.

“We’re so proud of this team! We’re honored that our success is recognized not only by our own community, but by the Internal Revenue Service,” says United Way of Greater Stark County President and CEO Maria Heege. “The VITA Program is a great way to help local individuals and families work toward Financial Stability, which in turn benefits everyone in Greater Stark County.”

### **About United Way of Greater Stark County**

United Way of Greater Stark County fights for the Health, Education and Financial Stability of every person in every community. We win by living United. By forging unlikely partnerships. By finding new solutions to old problems. By mobilizing the best resources. And by inspiring individuals to join the fight against their community’s most daunting social crisis. Our mission is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our communities in Greater Stark County. In order to live better, we must live United. For more information about United Way of Greater Stark County visit [www.uwstark.org](http://www.uwstark.org). Offices are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. (330) 491-0445.

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