

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Walsh University Wins United Way of Greater Stark County's VITA "Pack the House" Tax Filing Event

(Canton, OH) February 8, 2018 – United Way of Greater Stark County's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program recently hosted a Tax-A-Thon on February 2nd and 3rd. The event featured a "Pack the House" event between students at Malone, Mount Union and Walsh Universities. IRS-trained volunteer student tax preparers from these schools participated in a friendly competition to see which team could file the most tax returns and log the most hours during the event.

"VITA's Pack the House is a fun way for local students and alumni to support their alma mater," says Chrisann Leaman, Manager of United Way of Greater Stark County's Financial Prosperity Center at OhioMeansJobs. The winner of this year's Pack the House is Walsh University. Their team of volunteers received a plaque and a trophy that travels to each year's winning school.

The Tax-A-Thon featured 24 hours of free tax preparation split into 2 days of service for local taxpayers with annual incomes of \$65,000 or less. VITA volunteers helped 355 local taxpayers file their returns during the event, bringing \$397,069 in refunds. This amount includes \$193,118 in EIC and child tax credits.

"We're really excited about the number of tax filers who are taking advantage of the free VITA services," says VITA Site Coordinator Tami Stephens. "We're only 8 days into tax season, and we've already processed 576 returns. Total refunds currently total \$622,521 with \$320,481 in EIC and child tax credits. "This money helps people in our community and stimulates the local economy."

United Way of Greater Stark County's VITA service was named "Ohio Benefit Bank Site of the Year" by the Ohio Association of Food Banks for the past 3 years. VITA was also voted one of the top three tax services in Stark County in The Canton Repository's Readers' Choice Awards for the past 2 years.

"The number taxpayers taking advantage of our free VITA services grows every year, so we're very excited about that," says UWGSC President and CEO Maria Heege. "This increase equates to more money in refunds coming back to people and businesses in Greater Stark County."

VITA volunteers receive training from the Internal Revenue Service. They work with clients to identify tax credits that are often overlooked, while helping people avoid the high cost of paid preparers and predatory lenders. Those filing with direct deposit can typically expect a refund in 7-10 days. An IRS-compliant drop-off service was also available February 9th through April 12th, 10:30AM – 5:30PM for taxpayers who are unable to schedule in-person assistance.

Visit www.uwstark.org/freetax or call 330-994-VITA to schedule an appointment for FREE tax filing. The call center is available Monday-Thursday, 10AM -5PM. Tax clinics are scheduled at multiple locations throughout tax season.

About United Way

United Way of Greater Stark County fights for the Health, Education and Financial Stability of every person in every community. The agency collaborates, convenes, and partners to support programs and initiatives that break the cycle of poverty, promote a healthy community where children are successful from kindergarten through graduation to a career, and where families have the tools, skills, and support they need to become financially independent. We win by living United. For more information about United Way of Greater Stark County visit www.uwstark.org. Headquarters are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. (330) 491-0445.

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