

## NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Volunteers Needed to Prepare Taxes During Tax Season; Free Training & Certification are Offered**

(Canton, OH) November 7, 2017 –United Way of Greater Stark County is still in need of volunteer tax preparers for the upcoming tax season. *No experience is necessary.* Individuals who participate in the 2018 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program receive training and IRS Certification appropriate for their volunteer position, as well as materials for self-study on basic income tax law for federal and state returns. In addition, several specific training sessions will take place prior to the kick-off of tax season.

Many volunteers have gone on to find good jobs preparing taxes. “This is a fantastic opportunity for local college students in need of volunteer hours or professional networking,” explains Chrisann Leaman, Financial Prosperity Center Manager at United Way of Greater Stark County. “Volunteering with VITA is a win-win. Our participants gain valuable tax preparation knowledge, while helping local families get the maximum refund when they file.” VITA volunteers are covered under the Volunteer Protection Act and are not accountable for tax returns filed to the IRS.

Because VITA volunteers are trained to identify tax credits that have been overlooked by other tax assistance programs, the program brings a substantial amount of money back into the community each year. This money stimulates the local economy, and helps people avoid the high cost of paid preparers and predatory lenders. “Tax clinics are scheduled at multiple locations throughout Stark and Carroll Counties, so volunteer tax preparers and those filing tax returns have many opportunities to participate.” says VITA Coordinator Tami Stephens.

Last tax season, United Way of Greater Stark County and its 93 VITA volunteers helped income tax clients in Stark and Carroll counties collect over \$3 million in tax credits and refunds. This extra money helps people who are struggling, and stimulates our local economy. Volunteer tax preparers donated 1,688 hours of their time and helped complete 4,166 Federal and State returns. The 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.

Anyone interested in volunteering should complete the online VITA volunteer registration form at [www.uwstark.org/freetax](http://www.uwstark.org/freetax) or contact **Tami Stephens** at **330-491-9989** or [tami.stephens@uwstark.org](mailto:tami.stephens@uwstark.org).

### **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](http://www.uwstark.org). Headquarters are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. (330) 491-0445.

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