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Dear Volunteer,

Everyone has been working very hard this season, and it shows. As of March 21st, 3,978 tax returns have been filed. Thanks to your help, we've brought in a total of **\$8,994,642.00** in refunds back to the El Paso community!

The end of tax season is in sight. Thank you all for dedicating your time and service. Keep up the hard work as these final weeks play out.

As always, we would like to keep you updated and involved with the VITA program. This newsletter is a way for us to keep you informed but more importantly it is a place for you to share any stories, ideas, or suggestions about your volunteer experience. We would love to hear from you! Contact Brittany Kellerman at bkellerman@epcuah.com with your input. You can also look on our website for a wealth of knowledge concerning the VITA program. Please visit our website at <http://www.freetaxeselpaso.org>.

Coalition for Family Economic Progress

Tax Law Update

The following AARA provisions will be extended to 2010:

- American Opportunity Credit
- Increased Child Tax Credits
- Making Work Pay Credit—Sch M
- Increased Earned Income Credits
- Residential or Non-Business Energy Credits

More Volunteer Opportunities

—March 25. 5pm-7pm

San Elcario Church
1556 San Elizario Rd. 79849

- April 15 Tax Season Finale

Times and locations are tentative, if you are interested in volunteering please contact us for that information.

We still need your help this tax season! Above are the sites that could use more volunteers. If you are available to help out on any of these days please contact Brittany Kellerman at bkellerman@epcuah.com or call our office at (915) 838-9608.

Operation Unified Response (Haiti Earthquake) Qualifies for Filing Extension

In response to the Earthquake in Haiti, many members of the Armed Forces are involved in Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE. The Secretary of Defense declared it a contingency operation, meaning members of the Armed Forces serving under Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE, have a minimum 180 day extension to file. There are no penalties owed for late filing or late payment of taxes.

Most of our VITA sites will not have many people in this situation, however due to the proximity of Fort Bliss, some taxpayers may have questions.

Earned Income Credit Awareness Kickoff Party!



VITA volunteers help themselves to a delicious lunch spread.

January 23rd, 2010 marked the start of our tax season, and it began with a bang! Volunteers met at Houchen Community Center for lunch, mingling, guest speakers, and the opening of one of our VITA sites.

Lucio Glenn from Congressman Reyes' Office spoke about the importance that the VITA program holds in our community and pledged the support of Congressman Reyes' office in our efforts. Additionally, the leadership



Attendees listen while Lucio Glenn from Congressman Reyes' Office speaks about the importance of the VITA program.

team each gave a few encouraging remarks to kick-off the season — Larry Garcia and Luis Caballero from El Paso Affordable housing, Ricardo Soto from the IRS, Mark Alvarado from the City of El Paso, and Linda Austin from Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. Larry Garcia thanked the volunteers by stating "it can't be done without you! The success of the VITA program is all thanks to you." Ricardo Soto highlighted the significant impacts that the Earned Income Tax Credit has on the El Paso community. Mr. Soto made it clear that the work that we do at the VITA sites has a greater impact on our community than simply providing free tax preparation

services. The VITA sites help to contribute millions of dollars to the local economy, return thousands of dollars in EITC to many El Paso families, and encourage families to use their refunds to save.



Next, a census representative informed people of the importance of getting counted in the 2010 census (information on the next page).

Finally, volunteers began filing the first tax returns of the season so that new volunteers could see a real site in action and prepare for the months to come.



Diana Garcia helps file some of the first returns of the season.

Thank you to all of those who spoke and attended!



Please be on the look out for your invite to our 2010 Volunteer Recognition Event!

MAKE YOURSELF COUNT! THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 2010 CENSUS

Soon, the US Census Bureau will be sending out a 2010 Census Questionnaire, and we here at the Coalition of Families for Economic Progress want to remind you of the importance of filling out and returning this form. Here's four important reasons why we all need to be counted...

1. Federal funds: Census 2010 will influence federal funding that flows into our community for the next 10-12 years
2. Community Infrastructure: The government uses Census numbers to allocate critical needs like schools, transportation, health centers, and affordable housing.
3. Voting rights: Census numbers are used to draw voting districts and to figure out state representatives.
4. Economic development: Businesses and other entities use census numbers to plan for investment and business development.

Laws require that the information you give the census bureau remains confidential and will only be used to determine the area's population and economic status.

SO FILL OUT YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND MAKE YOURSELF COUNT! Also, please share this information with the taxpayers at your VITA site!

Economic Recovery Payment

Between May and August 2009, the Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Railroad Retirement Board issued one-time Economic Recovery Payments (ERP) of \$250 (\$500 for those married filing jointly if both taxpayers qualify) to qualified recipients.

Qualified recipients include all Individuals who were eligible for Social Security, SSI, Veterans, or Railroad Retirement benefits at any time during the months of November 2008, December 2008, or January 2009.

IMPORTANT: The ERP is NOT the same as the Government Retiree Credits (US, State or Local Government) which is also \$250.

Often, taxpayers do not remember whether or not they have received this payment. If the information is entered incorrectly on their tax returns, the form will be rejected. **Information on whether or not an individual has received the ERP can be obtained by calling 1-866-234-2942. This is a new hotline set up makes it possible to verify receipt of the ERP. This new hotline will help significantly to reduce the number of rejects being caused by the Sch. M.**

Agency Issuing the ERP	Type of Payment Received: If you received:	Phone Number	Other Comments
Social Security Administration	Social Security Benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	1-800-772-1213 (say "agent" and then "personal" for quicker service.	One-time payment sent in May separate from monthly SS check (paper and electronic) Payment will not show on 1099 SSA statement.
Department of Veterans Affairs	Disabled Veterans Benefits	1-800-827-1000	Payments delivered between June and August.
Railroad Retirement Board	Railroad Retirement Benefits	1-877-772-5772 (then push 0 to be connected to local office)	TP should review bank statements between May and August. They will look up the payment. Callers must have their RRB number



El Paso Affordable Housing

6801 Viscount Blvd

El Paso, TX 79925

Please contact us with any

questions/suggestions at

915-838-9608 or

bkellerman@epcuah.com

Visit our website:

www.freetaxeselpaso.org

<http://www.freetaxeselpaso.org>

AS THE TAX
SEASON WEARS
ON, HERE ARE A
FEW JOKES TO
KEEP YOUR
SPIRITS UP!



TAX HUMOR

Q: What insect is good at math?

A: An account-ant!

The owner of a small deli was being questioned by an IRS agent about his tax return. He had reported a net profit of \$80,000 for the year.

"Why don't you people leave me alone?" the deli owner said. "I work like a dog, everyone in my family helps out, the place is only closed three days a year. And you want to know how I made \$80,000?"

"It's not your income that bothers us," the agent said. "It's these deductions. You listed six trips to Bermuda for you and your wife."

"Oh, that," the owner said smiling. "I forgot to tell you - we also deliver."

Children may be deductible, but they are still taxing.

A taxpayer received a strongly worded "second notice" that his taxes were overdue. Hastening to the collector's office, he paid his bill, saying apologetically that he had overlooked the first notice.

"Oh," confided the collector with a smile, "we don't send out first notices. We have found that the second notices are more effective."