

SCGOV HEALTHnews

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Free Tax Aid to help people file for valuable tax credits

Free tax aid is available at locations throughout Sarasota County for the quick filing of federal individual income tax returns at AARP Tax Aid sites and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. Residents who earned \$48,279 or less last year can use the VITA tax aid sites in Sarasota County. This service is not for business returns or complex tax issues.

The United Way of Sarasota County operates Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites as part of a coordinated effort between the United Way's Financial Stability Partnership and the Sarasota County Earned Income Tax Credit Task Force. The goal is to help ensure that residents who are eligible for the various tax credits receive their earned share. The AARP Foundation also operates tax aid sites. No appointments are needed for the AARP Foundation sites.

Both the AARP and VITA free tax sites allow residents to electronically file their tax returns so they can receive any refund sooner. Generally, a refund can be posted to a person's bank account within seven to 10 days after the visit to one of the AARP Foundation or VITA sites. Trained IRS-certified volunteers will be at each location to provide free personal income tax assistance to EITC-eligible residents and older adults (some guidelines apply). Services include responding to questions, assisting eligible persons, including older adults, in filing their taxes, reporting and receiving the benefit of all available and eligible credits including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit.

Many people will qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for the first time because their income declined, their marital status changed or they added children to their families. Families with three or more children also get an extra boost with a larger credit this year. The Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, can make life a little easier for workers struggling to make ends meet in today's tight economy—up to \$5,600, or more. Yet, the IRS estimates one in four eligible taxpayers could miss out on this valuable tax credit.

Anyone who earned \$48,279 or less from wages, or self-employment in 2009 is encouraged to see if they qualify. Eligible taxpayers can get their EITC only if they file federal income tax returns – even if they are not otherwise required to file – and specifically claim the credit.

Taxpayers should bring the following to help determine their EITC eligibility and to help prepare their tax returns:

- Photo identification
- Valid Social Security cards for the taxpayer, spouse and dependents
- Birth dates for primary, secondary and dependents on the tax return
- Current year's tax package, if received
- Wage and earning statement(s) Forms W-2, W-2G, 1099-R, from all employers
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1099)
- A copy of last year's federal and state returns, if available
- Bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit
- Other relevant information about income and expenses
- Total paid for day care
- Day care provider's identifying number.

The Sarasota County Commission issued a proclamation recognizing this month as Sarasota County Tax Credit Awareness Month. Since these tax credits are also generally spent locally, this helps to improve the county's economy. In addition, this valuable service helps older residents and middle income and lower-income residents who either need assistance in filing their taxes or who need to consult about a tax issue.

For more information including a link to online EITC filing, visit the Sarasota County Web site at www.scgov.net. If you do not have computer access, call United Way 2-1-1 of Manasota Inc. by dialing 2-1-1 for more information. Those with mobile or pay phones should call 941-308-4357.

Local AARP and VITA Tax Aid E-File Sites and their hours are as follows:

SARASOTA (Sites now open unless otherwise noted)

Monday through Thursday; 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Fruitville Library
100 Coburn Road

Monday; 3 to 7:30 p.m.; Thursday, 12:30 - 4 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Gulf Gate Library
7112 Curtiss Ave.

Monday and Tuesday, 4 – 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday and Thursday 1 - 4:30 p.m.
Selby Library
1331 First St.

Tuesday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Senior Friendship Center
1888 Brother Geenen Way

Wednesday and Thursday 4 - 8 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
North Sarasota County United Way Building (VITA Walk-in Site – no appointments
needed)
1445 Second St.

Tuesday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Only available on: Feb. 9 and 16)
Janie's Garden (VITA Site by appointment only)
2350 Central Ave.

LAUREL

Wednesday, 3 to 7 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
(Only available on: Feb. 5, 12 and 19)
Laurel Park Community Center (VITA Site by appointment only – Appointments
scheduled at site)
509 Collins Road

VENICE

Friday, 1 – 5 p.m. (Opens Feb. 5)
Bay Indies Park
950 Ridgewood Ave.

Monday and Wednesday; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Jacaranda Library
4143 Woodmere Blvd.

Wednesday and Thursday, 4 – 8 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
(Available only on: Feb. 6 and 27; March 6 and 13, and April 3 and 10)
South County Family YMCA (VITA Site – Walk-In Site - no appointments needed)
701 Center Road, Venice Branch Board Room

Tuesday and Wednesday; 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.; Thursday, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Opens Feb. 4)
Venice Community Center
326 S. Nokomis Ave.

ENGLEWOOD

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Sun Trust Bank
333 South Indiana Ave.

NORTH PORT

Friday; noon – 5 p.m.

North Port City Hall (VITA Site by appointment only – Appointments scheduled at site)
4970 City Hall Blvd., second floor

Monday; 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Holiday Park Recreation Center (Rec. Hall)
5401 Holiday Park Blvd.

Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Friday, 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
North Port Community Education Center (AKA North Port Senior Center)
4940 Pan American Blvd.

Monday, 4 - 8 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
North Port Family YMCA (VITA Site by appointment only - Appointments scheduled at site)
5930 Sam Shapos Way, North Port

Thursday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Opens Feb. 4)
North Port Library
13800 Tamiami Trail

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