

## Press Release

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### **Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Kicks Off 10<sup>th</sup> Year, Free Tax Preparation Available at More than 200 Bay Area Locations**

#### **Tax Sites Also Connect Low-wage Workers to Free, Community Financial Services**

SAN FRANCISCO, January 27, 2012 – United Way of the Bay Area today announced the tenth annual kick-off of Earn It! Keep It! Save It!, the Bay Area’s largest, free tax preparation program. The program not only helps low- and moderate-income taxpayers keep more of what they earn, it brings much-needed tax dollars back into our community.

The Earn It! Keep It! Save It! coalition will provide free tax preparation at more than 200 Bay Area locations to households that earned less than \$50,000 in 2011. To find a tax site, call 211 or visit [www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org](http://www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org).

Last year, the program prepared taxes for nearly 60,000 families and helped bring back \$63.8 million in tax refunds back into our community. That money gets spent locally, helping generate economic growth, jobs, and a stronger tax base.

Earn It! Keep It! Save It! is also an important gateway to connect with other free, community financial services, many of which can be accessed through its free tax sites.

“Our free tax sites open the door to programs that empower people to improve their finances,” said Kelly Batson, a director at United Way of the Bay Area, which leads the regional Earn It! Keep It! Save It! coalition. “In addition to saving families hundreds of dollars on tax preparation, our sites connect low-income families with programs that can help them start saving, go back to school, get a good job, buy a first home or start a new business.”

For example, East Oakland resident Jacqueline C. visited the Earn It! Keep It! Save It! tax site at SparkPoint Oakland after learning about it from a friend. Free tax help was just the first step for Jackie. Having worked for many years as a book keeper, she was eager to improve her income. SparkPoint

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connected her to a subsidized, 12-week green-diesel training program, which enabled her to secure her Class-A driver’s license, authorizing her to drive 18-wheel diesel trucks. In addition, she earned a certificate that makes her eligible to service and retrofit older, heavy diesel trucks with green-diesel filter systems. This is a valuable skill, given lower truck-emissions standards recently implemented by the Port of Oakland.

“I first came to SparkPoint just to get my taxes done and to see if I could get help with my PG&E bill. Before I knew it, I was enrolled in school, and now I’m driving a truck. It’s awesome!” Jackie said.

Last year, Earn It! Keep It! Save It! processed \$63.8 million in refunds for 59,984 Bay Area households. It also helped low-wage families claim more than \$20.2 million in EITC.

WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free tax return preparation and e-filing</li> <li>• Assistance filing tax-credit claims, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), childcare credits</li> <li>• Asset-building and income support resources</li> </ul>
WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Bay Area households that earned less than \$50,000 in 2011 are eligible for free tax preparation service and e-filing. EITC eligibility depends on family income and size.</li> </ul>
WHERE & WHEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earn It! Keep It! Save It! operates sites in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma Counties. For times and locations, call 211 or visit <a href="http://www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org">www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org</a>.</li> </ul>
WHAT TO BRING:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Security cards or ITIN for all family members</li> <li>• W-2 forms for all jobs</li> <li>• 1099 forms and other income forms</li> <li>• Voided check for direct deposit</li> <li>• Childcare provider information: name, address, tax id number</li> <li>• Previous year’s tax return if available</li> <li>• Name, address and phone number of landlord (if you have one).</li> </ul>

**\*Note to Editors:** Media are encouraged to visit tax preparation sites to talk with volunteers and taxpayers. To arrange a visit, please contact Maria Stokes, 415-808-4264, [mstokes@uwba.org](mailto:mstokes@uwba.org).

**About Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Bay Area**

Led by United Way of the Bay Area, Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Bay Area coordinates more than 200 free tax preparation sites and asset development programs in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Solano Counties, with the participation of more than 250 public and private-sector partners. Funding partners include Bank of America, Citi, City of Oakland – Community Action Partnership, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Internal Revenue Service, Wal-Mart Foundation, Levi Strauss Foundation, National Disability Institute, Union Bank of California, United Way Worldwide, United Way of the Bay Area, Wells Fargo, and others. For more information please visit [www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org](http://www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org) or call 510-238-2418.

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