

Press Release

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Free Tax Program Saves Low-income Taxpayers up to \$360

Bay Area's Largest FREE Tax Assistance Program Aims to Help 50,000 Taxpayers During 2009 Tax Season

SAN FRANCISCO, January 31, 2009 – In a time of layoffs and foreclosures, there's some good news for low-income taxpayers in the Bay Area: instead of spending up to \$360 on commercial tax preparation services, households that earned less than \$45,000 in 2008 can have their taxes prepared for free by Earn It! Keep It! Save It!, the Bay Area's largest free tax assistance program. The program, led by United Way, kicked off today at the Wells Fargo Bank in Bayview-Hunters Point and will operate more than 170 free tax sites throughout the Bay Area until April 15.

"During these tough economic times, saving up to \$360 on tax preparation fees, check cashing and costly 'instant refund' loans is significant for low-income families," said United Way Chief Community Investment Officer Carole Watson. "That money can be used to pay for rent, groceries or utility bills. Low-income taxpayers can receive their refunds – every cent! -- in just about a week by going to one of the Earn It! Keep It! Save It! sites, where they will get free, high-quality tax help from an IRS-certified preparer."

The Earn It! Keep It! Save It! coalition is making a special push this year to encourage taxpayers to avoid "Rapid Refunds," which are heavily promoted to low-income households by many well-known commercial preparers. Free tax help can save eligible taxpayers up to \$360*:

- Commercial tax preparation fees: \$100
- Electronic filing fee: \$40
- Rapid refund loan fee: \$125
- Additional rapid refund fees: \$35
- Check cashing fee: \$60

Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Bay Area is celebrating its seventh year in 2009. In 2008, the coalition processed \$35.6 million in refunds for 46,924 Bay Area households.

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WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FREE tax return preparation and e-filing • Assistance filing tax-credit claims, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), childcare credits and San Francisco's Working Families Credit • Asset-building information
WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Bay Area households that earned less than \$45,000 in 2008 are eligible for free tax preparation service and e-filing. EITC eligibility depends on family income and size.)
WHERE & WHEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn It! Keep It! Save It! operates sites in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Solano Counties. For times and locations, call 2-1-1 or 800-358-8832 or visit www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org.
WHAT TO BRING:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Security cards or ITIN for all family members W-2 forms for all jobs • 1099 forms and other income forms • Voided check for direct deposit • Childcare provider information: name, address, tax id number • Previous year's tax return if available • Name, address and phone number of landlord (if you have one) • 2008 Economic Stimulus Payment amount

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.

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

Led by United Way, Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Bay Area coordinates more than 170 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 200 public and private-sector partners. Funding partners include Bank of America, Chevron, City of Oakland – Community Action Partnership, East Bay Community Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, First 5 Alameda County, First Five Contra Costa, HSBC Bank USA, N. A., KPMG LLP, Levi Strauss Foundation, The Lurie Company, Morgan Stanley, National Disability Institute, The San Francisco Foundation, State Street of California, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, Union Bank of California, United Way of America, United Way of the Bay Area, Wells Fargo & Company, Y&H Soda Foundation, and others. For more information please visit www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org or call 415-808-4300.

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