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## Successful VITA Program has Helped Working Families

Reno, NV– As part of annual efforts to increase tax refunds and credits for low and moderate-income families and individuals, United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra (UWNNS) sponsored a collaborative that operated and funded 11 free community tax preparation programs and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites throughout the region.

"We are pleased with this year's results," said Karen Barsell, United Way CEO and President. "This year's VITA sites promoted by United Way and the collaborative partners were responsible for the preparation of more than 2300 tax returns, amounting to more than \$3 million in refunds for low and moderate - income residents. We were able to increase our efforts over the prior year."

VITA is a partnership between the Internal Revenue Service and local partners and sponsors such as United Way. It provides free tax help to individuals and families earning less than \$49,000 per year using trained, certified, volunteer tax preparers. VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, and other convenient locations including the Community Services Agency. All locations also offered free electronic filing.

VITA sites are an important way for low-income working families to learn about and access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Each year, thousands of low-income Nevadans miss out on the EITC because they don't know they qualify or don't know how to claim the credit. This year, VITA sites helped people apply for more than \$1.5 million in tax credits.

"Increasing financial stability for all northern Nevada residents is a primary goal for United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra," said United Way Board member, Nancy Brown from Charles Schwab Bank. "VITA sites are important in achieving that goal. Not only do the sites give us a chance to put more money back in people's pockets, but they are an opportunity educate the community about other resources that may be available, such as using Nevada 2-1-1 to locate job training programs, housing counseling and more."

"This coordinated effort is accomplished with the priceless efforts of more than 150 volunteers, community organizations such as the Family Resource Centers, Washoe County Libraries, Community Services Agency, several tribal sites, and others that pitch in to make Nevadans more financially stable," said Kevin Quint from Join Together Northern Nevada who chairs the annual VITA effort. "A big thanks goes to everyone and especially to the IRS for their help in training tax preparers and helping our collaborative partners to disseminate information about free tax preparation throughout the region."

**About United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra**

United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra brings the community together to identify our most pressing needs, produce measurable results, and, thereby, improve lives. United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra is achieving meaningful impact here in our community by using expertise and knowledge through innovative funding of programs and initiatives that have a positive influence on the people of northern Nevada and the Lake Tahoe communities. For more information, call 775-322-8668 or visit [www.uwnns.org](http://www.uwnns.org).