



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Roland Martinez

(210) 207-5920

roland.martinez3@santoniogov

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance season kicks off;
EITC Awareness Day celebrated**

SAN ANTONIO (Jan. 27, 2017) — Today is National Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Awareness Day. To celebrate, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program held a kickoff event to start the 2017 tax season, which runs through April 18. District 10 City Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem Mike Gallagher, District 5 City Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales, and U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) joined United Way of San Antonio/Bexar County, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of San Antonio, and the San Antonio VITA Coalition for the event.

Last year, the City of San Antonio/Department of Human Services, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of San Antonio Inc., United Way of San Antonio/Bexar County, and VITA San Antonio worked with hundreds of community volunteers to prepare more than 44,000 tax returns and returned more than \$60 million in refunds to taxpayers, including more than \$24 million in Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) dollars. This free service also saved taxpayers an estimated \$8 million in tax preparation fees.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) created the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program more than 40 years ago with local communities to provide free tax return preparation to low-income taxpayers, using IRS-trained community volunteers. VITA is an important tool in helping to ensure that all eligible residents are able to claim the EITC, Child Tax Credit, and other credits they might be eligible for.

The IRS joins partners nationwide to launch the EITC Awareness Day outreach campaign to ensure millions of workers get the EITC they earned and get it quickly. Awareness Day aims to increase eligibility awareness of refundable credits that many families miss out on. Along with the EITC, this includes refundable taxes paid, the Child Tax Credit, Child Care Tax Credit, and the American Opportunity tax credit (AOTC).

“Our coalition understands that a working family’s tax refund is a critical part of their household budget, and can also be an opportunity for saving and achieving short-term and long-term financial goals,” Mayor Pro Tem Gallagher said.

District 5 Councilwoman Gonzales said, “The success of San Antonio’s VITA program year after year is due to the hard work of our volunteer corps. Each year, hundreds of compassionate volunteers devote time to help their fellow residents during tax season.”

Mark Nerio, Chair of the United Way Families Issues Council and Vice President and Community Development Specialist for BB&T, said, “As a nonprofit organization responsible for ensuring our donors’ dollars are invested in effective and efficient programs and services, our volunteers think that VITA is one of our most valuable investments of time and resources. United Way’s 2-1-1 Help Line receives calls year-round and directs local residents earning up to \$60,000 to one of 18 San Antonio VITA locations with IRS-certified volunteers who help families and individuals keep more of their hard-earned money.”

J. Antonio Fernandez, President and CEO of Catholic Charities, said, “The VITA collaborative is such an important initiative in this community. Alleviating the burden of paying for tax preparation is a blessing to many of our vulnerable citizens. We are proud to be a part of this collaboration and look forward to helping those who need us most through this tax season.”

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One San Antonio

Diverse, internationally connected and globally competitive, San Antonio has a vibrant culture and economy and is consistently ranked among the fastest-growing cities in the United States. America’s seventh-largest city offers opportunities in industries ranging from bioscience, financial services, aerospace, cybersecurity, energy and transportation manufacturing to healthcare. In 2016, San Antonio was named an All-America City by the National Civic League. We are Military City, USA™, home to crucial military commands supported by a patriotic citizenry. We welcome 34.4 million visitors annually who inject \$13.6 billion annually into our economy, and UNESCO designated the city’s Spanish colonial missions as a World Heritage Site in 2015. Celebrating its 300th anniversary in 2018, San Antonio is a city with a storied past and an even brighter future. For more information, visit www.sanantonio.gov.

About United Way:

United Way is the largest private health and human service organization in Bexar County. Through investments in 69 partner agencies and 138 programs, United Way works to advance the common good, improve lives, create lasting changes in our neighborhoods and help the community live united.

About Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc.:

Since 1941, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc. has been helping those most in need in San Antonio and surrounding areas. The mission of Catholic Charities is to provide for the needs of the community through selfless service under the sign of love. We serve the hungry, the homeless, the desperate and those needing help when facing life’s daily challenges. We serve people of all faiths and all walks of life, from those not yet born to those at the end of life’s journey. We advocate social justice in order to eliminate oppression and build a just and compassionate society. For more information, visit www.ccaosa.org.