



For Immediate Release

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Connecticut Free Tax Preparation Program to promote 2021 Tax Season and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Awareness

***Program aims to help Bridgeport households struggling to make ends meet
File State and Federal Taxes for free***

Bridgeport, Conn. –On February 4, 2021 – Members of the Greater Bridgeport Family Economic Security Coalition, elected government officials, coordinated by the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) and Internal Revenue Service, kicked-off the start of the 2021 tax season with a virtual event. This tax season, Bridgeport families who made less than \$57,000 in 2020 may be eligible to participate in the Connecticut Free Tax Prep program at local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites and have their taxes prepared for free by IRS-certified volunteers. In addition, income eligible families may qualify for additional tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

This year's Connecticut Free Tax Prep campaign provided at VITA sites across Fairfield County is made possible with support from the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, Citi, and Near & Far Aid.

Last year, IRS-certified preparers in Bridgeport and surrounding areas in Fairfield County prepared 8,473 tax returns, returning \$13.1 million in state and federal refunds to local families including \$3.4 million in federal EITC, which may have otherwise gone unclaimed. The Connecticut EITC provides an additional credit for working families, which is 23% of the federal EITC. This tax credit helps low- and moderate-income working families with children have more money for monthly bills, to pay off debt and to save for emergencies.

To prevent the spread of the Coronavirus, this tax season, CAHS has partnered with Code for America to run a digital VITA on-line service at [GETYOURREFUND.org](https://getyourrefund.org). The Get Your Refund platform is a safe and secured online system that has been vetted and approved by the IRS to provide the same quality services as our in-person VITA sites. Taxpayers answer intake questions and upload tax documents on [GetYourRefund.org/CAHS-CT](https://getyourrefund.org/CAHS-CT). Our IRS trained and certified VITA Volunteers will remotely prepare the tax returns, speak with the taxpayers to review their returns, and file the returns with taxpayers' consent.

“At the completion of last year's tax season the CAHS CT VITA Coalition assisted over 17,000 tax payers, resulting in \$25.1 million in federal refunds and \$7.1 in EITC. We are thrilled with those results and we are pleased to be able to again offer qualified families and individuals free tax preparation and filing during this upcoming tax season,” said John Merz, Chief Executive Officer of CAHS. “This is an important service and offers a significant savings to those who are challenged by the extra expense of tax preparation. In addition to free tax services, CAHS also offers educational programs that help build long-lasting financial stability.” CAHS is the organization that coordinates the VITA campaign across the state of Connecticut.

“VITA provides much needed free tax advice and guidance to people who cannot afford tax accountants or are confused by our complex tax rules. Too many people fail to receive refunds or the earned income tax credit that are owed to them—leaving on the table billions of often critical hard earned dollars,” stated U.S. Senator, Richard Blumenthal

“Free tax preparation services and tax credits like the EITC are critical tools that can help eligible workers strengthen their financial stability,” said Gregory Schiefelbein, Citi Community Relations New York Tri-State Market Leader. “Through Citi's collaboration with Connecticut Association for Human Services and the Citi Foundation's partnership with Code for America, Citi and the Citi Foundation are helping to promote and expand access to free, high-quality tax preparation and other essential resources to empower eligible Bridgeport residents to make the most of tax season.”

Residents can call 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org, the United Way's free information hotline to find out more information or to locate the closest VITA site. For more information about federal or state EITC eligibility, residents can visit www.irs.gov or www.ct.gov/drs/eitc.

“An unprecedented number of people are struggling to make ends meet during this crisis. Financial stability is critically important, which is why we proudly support the VITA free tax preparation program. This critically important program provides the opportunity for working families to realize and secure the tax credits and refunds they are entitled to, and so badly need to pay for things like food, housing, healthcare and childcare. **People of all income levels are eligible to file both your federal and state returns for free using MyFreeTaxes.com.** This is the only free, national, online tax filing product offered by a nonprofit. United Way has made it available to over 100 million U.S. taxpayers as part of our fight for the financial stability of every person in every community.”

noted –Jeff Kimball, President & CEO of the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County

“This past year has been particularly challenging with the pandemic causing health concerns and more financial burdens for many of our residents. We are grateful for programs like VITA providing resources for individuals in Bridgeport to assist with filing and financial services that may earn their families a much needed tax refund,” stated Mayor Ganim. “Tax season can be intimidating. This partnership program offers financial support and education in a process that in some cases will also result in a cash return.”

To help families trying to save their tax refund dollars for a rainy day or unforeseen expenses, CAHS encourages income tax filers at VITA sites to direct deposit their federal and state refunds into both checking and savings accounts.

About the Connecticut Association for Human Services

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, uniquely combines outreach into working poor communities at the neighborhood level with broad-based policy work at the state and federal level. Founded in 1910, CAHS is focused on helping families and children build the skills and assets they need for lasting economic success, strengthening Connecticut's economy, and improving its workforce. In addition to advocacy and outreach, CAHS publishes consumer guides and policy briefs. For more about CAHS, please visit www.cahs.org

About United Way of Coastal Fairfield County

United Way of Coastal Fairfield County's mission is: “Together, we mobilize our communities to improve people's lives”. Our vision is that all at-risk children in Coastal Fairfield County are successful in school and prepared for success in life. United Way of Coastal Fairfield County serves the towns of Bridgeport, Darien, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport and Wilton. Find out more at our website at www.unitedwaycfc.org, and follow us on social media @UWCFC.

VITA Locations in Bridgeport (and surrounding areas)

Alliance for Community Empowerment	Bridgeport Hospital	Burroughs Community Center	Family & Children's Agency	Norwalk Community College	Boys & Girls Club @ Yerwood Ctr.
Housatonic Community College	Fairfield Public Library	Career Resources	Triangle Community Center	Ebenezer Gospel Assembly	Southend Community Center- Stratford

For more information about VITA services or what to bring to a VITA appointment visit <https://www.cahs.org/vita.html>

