



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

Autumn Hall (right) helps Shayla Brazier with her taxes. The Vegas Coalition, comprised of nonprofits, corporations and local municipalities, is helping locals with their taxes.

## Organization to offer free tax preparation services

By Lés Pierres Streater  
Sentinel-Voice

The Vegas Valley Coalition's second annual Free Tax Service and Electronic Filing program started Monday to help low to moderate income residents file their federal tax returns with the IRS now through tax day, April 15.

The program seeks to assist wage earners whose annual income falls within the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines. This free service will be provided several days each week at scheduled sites throughout the cities of Las Vegas and North Las Vegas.

"The coalition consists of members from non-profit organizations, corporations and municipalities," said Jacqueline Ingram, chair of the Vegas Valley Coalition. "We found (out) from the IRS that there are millions of dollars [Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)] that sit there unclaimed. So, the coalition came together in order to provide free tax preparation and electronic filing primarily to the low and moderate income families within the community."

Ingram explained, "[Many] families are unaware that they qualify for [the EITC and other tax credits]... at the same time we wanted to help them keep the dollars that they're spending to [pay] have their taxes prepared... We want them to keep those dollars in their pockets for their [family needs]. These unclaimed dollars will come back into the community and be circulated here [as a] stimulus for growth and de-

velopment."

Michael Castle, a tax specialist with the IRS, and member of the coalition shared his perspectives on the program and filing requirements: "We are here partnering... to provide tax preparation and electronic filing services [with help from] AARP (American Association of Retired Persons). These individuals are trained personnel who are able to handle most current year returns for people. They can only do a basic return and not schedule A's (itemized deductions forms) or business returns."

"This is a first come, first serve program and we will have a lot of people taking advantage of this service; so, we ask that people be a little patient as we prepare and electronically file your return at no cost," said Michele Johnson, President/CEO of the Consumer Credit Counseling, a coalition member.

The following are service locations and scheduled hours: Doolittle Community Center, 1950 "J" Street, Daily from 9am to 7pm, Sat. 10am-4pm; Latin Chamber of Commerce, 300 N. 13th Street, Mon. to Wed. from 9 to 11am and 1 to 4pm; Consumer Credit Counseling Center, 2650 S. Jones, Daily from 9am to 7pm, Sat. 9am-3pm; Casa Rosa Apartments, North Las Vegas, 1731 Yale Street, Wed. to Fri. from 10am to 4pm

Individuals and couples are eligible for the free tax preparation service provided that they don't exceed the HUD annual household income guidelines: 1 person-\$31,680; 2 persons-\$36,160;

3 persons-\$40,720; 4 persons-\$45,200; 5 persons-\$48,800; 6 persons-\$52,400; 7 persons-\$56,080, and 8 persons-\$59,680.

"We request that people who plan to utilize this program make sure that they have social security cards and identification for everyone that will be claimed on the tax return. The number one mistake on tax returns is the name and social security numbers are a mismatch from the Social Security (agency) files, and the return is rejected," Castle informed.

"The [coalition's second season] is kicking off [to offer] free tax preparation and electronic filing for anybody within the community that meets the low to moderate income guidelines... [Last tax season] we did over 3,200 returns. We expect to triple that number this year" Johnson predicted.

Three participants at the Doolittle Center commented about how they appreciate the program for their tax filing needs:

"I think that this is wonderful and they should offer it all the time," Alberto Sprauve, Jr., said.

"I couldn't afford to pay for a regular tax preparer to do my taxes and get a modest return as well. So, I'm grateful that this is here," Andrew Thomas stated.

"With a limited income, I need to save as much money as I can to go to my family and this helps a lot," Shayla Brazier expressed.

For more information, please contact Consumer Credit Counseling Service at 702-364-0344.

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