

Tax consultants offer advice for quick returns

Beta Alpha Psi is offering free tax-time workshops until this year's deadline

By Nika Carlson
News Reporter

April 15 is more than a month away, but experts say it is never too early to file your tax return.

Tax consultant Blane Hamilton, who works for H&R Block, said changes for tax returns are simple this year, but filing taxes can be difficult under any circumstances. Whether students are looking for free advice or paid assistance, many options are available for those who need help.

The University's accounting honors society Beta Alpha Psi is offering free tax preparation workshops in March and April for U.S. citizens. The group held its first workshop on Feb. 28 and will have its second

workshop tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in 228 Chiles. It will hold two more sessions April 3 and April 10 at the same location.

Accounting students, with the aid of professionals, will help people prepare basic returns or even offer advice for those who want to do their own taxes, program coordinator Nick Wright said.

"If someone comes in with \$150,000 in income with tons of real estate and stock options, that's not really what we're here to do," he said. "We're here to do student returns and low-income returns."

Wright said those who come for help should bring their 2002 tax return, their W-2s (which document how much income the individual earned last year) and any other forms that might be useful in filing a return.

Additionally, University students should bring in their tuition statement,

also called form 1098-T, which summarizes the amount of tuition and fees paid last year. As long as nobody claims a student as a dependent, the student can use the form to get an educational credit that will reduce the amount of tax owed, Hamilton said.

Help at the Beta Alpha Psi workshops is given on a first-come, first-serve basis, so Wright recommends people get there as soon as possible.

"I've heard in past years they've had to turn people away," he said.

The society, which has about 10 computers for filers to use, helped 23 people at its first workshop.

The University is offering tax help for non-U.S. residents as well. The Office of International Programs is holding workshops to assist non-residents in filing a return. The first one is scheduled for this afternoon from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in 207 Chapman. More information about filing non-resident

taxes and workshops is also available on the Office of International Program Web site at <http://oip.uoregon.edu/iss/tax/>.

There is a wealth of general tax information on the Internal Revenue Service Web site, including a section with information for students. The Web site, <http://www.irs.gov>, gives updates on changes in tax law, directs filers to online and telephone filing options and answers frequently asked questions about filing returns. The Web-savvy can also download and print out tax forms. The IRS also has several telephone lines with tax help. One line has pre-recorded messages on common tax topics. That number is (800) 829-4477. Another line gives free live advice. That number is (800) 829-1040.

Oregon's Department of Revenue Web site, <http://www.dor.state.or.us>, also has downloadable tax forms and

advice on filing state taxes.

For those with more complicated tax returns, professional help is easy to find. The QwestDex yellow pages list more than 70 different specialists in tax return preparation.

Hamilton, who works for H&R Block, said many students use the national financial planning chain to prepare their taxes.

Prices can range from \$50 for a very simple return to \$600 for an extremely complex one, he said.

"The next couple of weeks is a slow time for tax returns, so now is the best time to come in and get your taxes done," he said.

Tax return forms are also available at U.S. Postal Service offices and in the Knight Library in the Document Center.

Contact the city/state politics reporter at nikacarlson@dailyemerald.com.

RIGHTS

continued from page 1

health care, education and shelter.

She said 54 countries have grown poorer since 1990, 34 have a lower life expectancy and "chronic poverty is virtually unchanged." At least 1.2 billion people live in poverty, and of those, more than half suffer from deprivation of at least one human right and one-third suffer from deprivation of two or more basic human rights, Robinson said.

In September 2000, a large gathering of UN member states gathered at the Millennium Assembly, where they agreed on the Millennium Declaration. The member states consented to meet eight goals by 2015, including plans to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and achieve universal primary education. At a later conference about financing the goals, it was determined that the United States would have to contribute \$50 billion per year to satisfy the goals.

One year later, Robinson said funds were diverted from human rights because of "an attack on democratic values," referring to Sept. 11, 2001. She added that ever since, the United States has had poor human and civil rights records.

In September 2002, Robinson left the UN. She now leads the Ethical Globalization Initiative, which she said her friends in Ireland call a "hell of a high fallutin" title for a small project. EGI has identified

three objectives that could contribute to greater human development and security. These issues are fostering more equitable international trade and development, strengthening responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa and shaping more humane migration policies, according to the EGI Web site.

Robinson said a significant reason for human trafficking is because the process of globalization has allowed motion in jobs, goods and services, not to the people who need jobs.

Robinson defined globalization as "the progressive integration of economies and societies."

Quoting from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Robinson said, "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible." She added, "If you don't know you have a duty and do something about it, your personality isn't fully developed."

During a question-and-answer session following the talk, Robinson was applauded when she criticized the IMF for having a policy that weakened already weak health care and education programs. Robinson also encouraged parents to teach their children at a young age about human rights.

"You don't protect human rights from the outside — it has to be taken care of locally," she said.

Justin Ahrenholtz is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

CON COURT

continued from page 1

duty" to not to follow a court decision.

Andries was one of the students who filed the original grievance last year, and he said the current Election Board's failure to learn from last year shows blatant disregard for law students who want to participate in the ASUO elections.

"The fact that it happened last year, and they knew about it — they should be able to learn from that mistake," Andries said. "They're not taking into consideration the entire student body. That's ridiculous. You can't be discriminating against 500 to 1,000 students. That's just the way it is."

The Election Board currently wants to hold the primary election on April

12-14 and the general election on April 19-21. April 23 is the first day of finals for the law school.

Day said the proposed election dates are the only viable options. The elections can't be moved a week later because they'll coincide with law school final exams, and they can't be moved a week earlier because April 7 is the last day to drop classes without a "w," which will clog DuckWeb. Day said the elections have to run on the days the board proposed despite the inconvenience for law students.

"I do believe that this is the best time to run student elections," Day said.

Andries disagreed.

He ran for ASUO office last year and was elected as a student senator, but he said he was at a disadvantage

because he had to campaign and study for final exams at the same time.

"It's really difficult," Andries said. "Law school finals are your entire grade. You got a lot of pressure from studying for that. I mean, I know people who are in the library from 7 a.m. to 8:30 or 9 at night — that's just the way it is."

He added that when the Elections Board schedules an election that conflicts with the law school's academic calendar, it limits law students' ability to participate in student government.

"You're just not on a level playing field," Andries said. "It's just not equal."

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LOCAL

continued from page 1

recognitions that other people's families have," Miller said. "We've been looking forward to it — or giving up on it, depending on when you ask — for a long, long time now."

Fidanque said details of the ceremonies are still being planned, but that the couples are arranging quick ceremonies because Multnomah County acted swiftly to approve the marriage licenses.

"We're doing it on short notice, so all of our boys and our extended family won't be able to be here, but they are definitely all supporting and they are all here in spirit," Miller said. "You've got two days. You don't really

have time to plan a real wedding."

Miller and Hendrickson have three children, and the couple doesn't expect the marriage to impact their children's lives much, if at all.

"We've waited a long time, there's no reason to wait any longer," Miller said. "We live here and it was kind of important to us to do it here, if we could."

Fidanque said the couples elected to wait until after the standard 72-hour waiting period ends on Saturday before getting married in order to prevent possible legal challenges.

"I cannot think of any action that could be taken that would be successful in invalidating these marriages," Fidanque said. "We're certainly prepared to defend them."

He added that the ACLU — which

joined Basic Rights Oregon in asking Multnomah County commissioners to review the issue before their landmark decision — is not putting pressure on other Oregon counties to follow suit.

"We'd be delighted if other counties follow suit, once their attorneys have had a chance to review the legal issues," he said. "Personally, I look forward to the day in Oregon when any couple who is committed to each other, regardless of their gender, can go into a county clerk's office and obtain a license. And it won't be a big deal."

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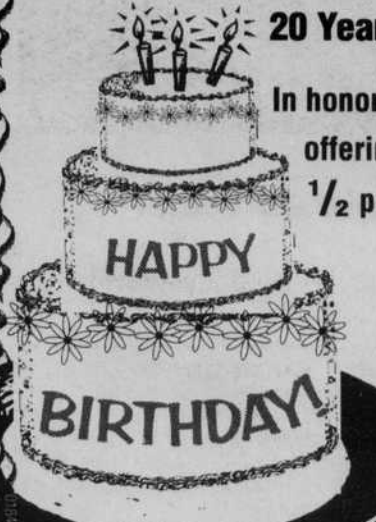
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