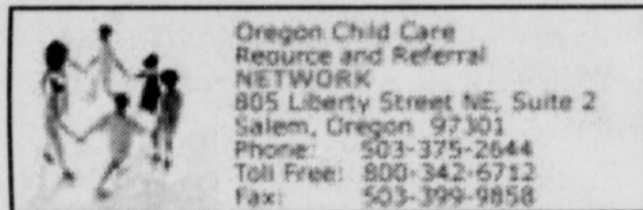


## Oregon Joins National Effort to Promote Child Tax Credits

This year, significant increases in federal and state tax credits can put thousands of dollars in the pockets of Oregonians.

That's why the Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Network is working with the National Women's Law Center to urge working parents to file for these credits to lower their taxes or increase their refunds.



"No one should pay more than their fair share of taxes. Last year, Oregonians missed out on nearly \$30 million in federal tax credits because they didn't claim them," said Mary Nemmers, executive director of the Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Network, a statewide association of 17 programs helping families find child care. "This year we are encouraging Oregon families to file and claim their credits," said Nemmers.

As a result of the federal increases, families may be eligible for:

- The **federal Child and Dependent Care Credit**, designed to offset some of the child or dependent care costs that families incur in order to work. The maximum value has increased to \$2,100 this year from \$1,440 in 2002. This is the first increase in more than 20 years.
- The **federal Child Tax Credit**, designed to help families offset some of the costs of raising children. This credit has increased from \$600 per child in 2002 to \$1,000 per child this year.
- The **federal Earned Income Tax Credit**, which helps provide a wage supplement for low-income families (those earning less than \$34,692 annually). The maximum credit has increased from \$4,140 in 2002 to \$4,204 this year.

In addition, the value of child care credits in Oregon also has increased. The **Oregon Child and Dependent Care Credit** increased from a maximum of \$1,440 in 2002 to a maximum of \$1,800 in 2003. This year for the first time, the **Oregon Working Family Child Care Credit**, which is worth up to 40 percent of qualifying child care expenses, is refundable, giving more tax assistance to low-income tax filers. Finally, the **Oregon Earned Income Credit** can be as much as \$210 in 2003.

To reach thousands of Oregon families with information about tax credits, the network is working with the Association of Oregon Broadcasters and its member television and radio stations to air public service announcements during February and March 2004.

In addition, the tax credit campaign will distribute user-friendly materials in English and Spanish to local child care providers, day care centers, and other area organizations. Free tax help also is available on the network's Web site - [www.OregonChildCare.org](http://www.OregonChildCare.org) - or by calling (toll-free) 1-800-342-6712.

The Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Network is a non-profit association of 17 local child care resource and referral agencies serving families, employers, and child care providers. The network maintains Oregon's most comprehensive database of child care providers to help families find and choose child care.



The National Women's Law Center is a non-profit organization that has been working since 1972 to advance and protect women's legal rights. It is supporting tax credit outreach in Oregon, California, Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, and the District of Columbia.

## SOLV Grants Available for Volunteer Efforts Statewide

SOLV, the statewide volunteer and community-building non-profit, recently announced new financial and staff resources available to volunteer projects throughout Oregon. These resources are available through SOLV's Project Oregon program, which assists anyone coordinating a SOLV project anywhere in the state.

Application forms, timelines, and other information are available from SOLV at 1-800-333-SOLV or at [www.solv.org/volsolvcup.shtml](http://www.solv.org/volsolvcup.shtml). The first deadline is Feb. 1, 2004, with a new deadline every two months. As in the past, the application is short and user-friendly.

SOLV will have small grants of up to \$250 for project costs, and increased staff time to assist with project planning, volunteer recruitment, and other aspects of projects. It also provides limited insurance, materials, and statewide recognition to five projects each year that receive an award from Gov. Ted Kulongoski on the steps of the Capitol.

SOLV's goal is to support 160 projects around the state in 2004. It also strives to support new coordinators who haven't coordinated volunteer projects before, and continues to offer Volunteer Action Training around the state to train Oregonians to lead their own projects.

SOLV predicts that the combination of intensive staff assistance and small grants will help volunteer efforts

in a way SOLV hasn't been able to provide in the past.

"We've doubled the amount of staff time on this program," says Neil Schulman, SOLV outreach coordinator. "That will mean that we can actively help plan projects, engage the SOLV volunteers around the state, and take some of the load off those organizing these great efforts at the local level. Ultimately, SOLV's help will prove as valuable as the relatively small amount of funding."

SOLV also has reinstated some of the small grants that existed before 2001. These funds can help pay for on-the-ground project costs. SOLV will look at all projects to best allocate both funds and staff time to actively help out.

Schulman stressed that SOLV supports a wide range of volunteer projects. "A lot of Oregonians know SOLV for organizing cleanups, but that's only part of what we do. We help out with as many tree plantings, watershed restoration projects, downtown enhancements, and other efforts as we do cleanups. A good SOLV project has three things in common: it fits in with our mission of building community through volunteerism, has an on-the-ground result that enhances the community, and is open to all Oregonians from all backgrounds and walks of life. There's plenty of room for Oregonians to decide what their community needs the most."

## Carry Winter Driving Supplies

Motorists are advised to carry the following supplies during winter conditions:

1. A full fuel tank and a good highway map.
2. Tire chains or other traction devices.
3. An ice scraper, battery booster cables, road flares, a properly inflated spare tire, a vehicle jack, lug wrench, and a basic tool kit.
4. A small shovel and a bag of kitty litter or sand for traction in case you get stuck, and a plastic tarp to help keep you dry while installing tire chains.
5. A flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs, an extra pair of winter gloves and a warm hat, a change of clothes and a warm blanket, snack foods, matches in a waterproof container, extra quarters for phone calls, a pocket knife, and a first aid kit.
6. A large thermos bottle filled with water or a hot drink.
7. A cell phone with fully charged batteries.
8. If you travel with a baby, pack extra food, warm clothes and blankets, some toys and games, and extra diapers.