

Free tax help available in Warm Springs

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When April 15, 2006, rolls around, will you be sure that you're getting the refund you deserve? According to the Internal Revenue Service, in 2002, only 34 percent of taxpayers eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in Warm Springs, and Jefferson and Crook counties, accessed the credit. That means the other 66 percent missed out on up to \$4,300 on their tax return.

What is the EITC?

The EITC is the largest refundable tax credit available to low-income taxpayers. The fact that it is refundable is important because it means that if you qualify for the EITC, and your credit is larger than the amount of taxes you owe, then you will receive a tax refund from the IRS.

In order to qualify for the EITC you must be a working individual or family and have a household income that falls within the income requirements defined by the IRS.

Free tax help from HDEA

The only way to take advantage of the EITC is to file a tax

return. For many families, this is an intimidating prospect. The High Desert Economic Alliance (HDEA) was created to raise awareness of available tax credits among low-income taxpayers and provide free tax preparation sites to help eligible taxpayers take advantage of the credits on their tax returns.

The HDEA is a coalition of nonprofit groups and governments including the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Crook and Jefferson counties, the IRS, the Oregon Department of Revenue, the Warm Springs Community Action Team, the Central Oregon Partnership, COCAAN, the AARP tax aid, the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, the Habitat for Humanity and the Oregon Child Development Coalition.

In Warm Springs, a free tax preparation site will be available during the tax season at the Family Resource Center, along with mobile sites at the senior center and in the Simnasho and Seekseequa communities.

With a jump-start on their outreach campaign, the HDEA hopes to increase the number of tax returns completed by the Warm Springs site from last year's total of 50.

Why free tax preparation?

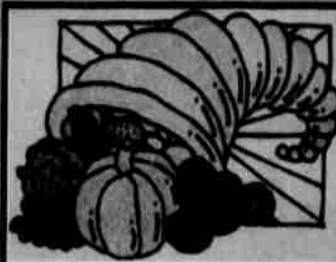
Taxpayers who normally prepare their own returns may not know that they qualify for the EITC and other credits and miss out on their benefits with a smaller refund. Taxpayers who go to paid preparers may access their credits, but after the preparer's fees are deducted, they still see a small refund. There is no cost to use the HDEA's free tax preparation sites. You have access to all of the same information you would through a paid preparer; however, your entire refund is yours to keep.

Another benefit of the free sites: filing back taxes. An eligible family can go back and file returns for the past three tax years without any penalty or assessment if they don't owe taxes. Many of these families may have a substantial return coming.

More information on the EITC and free tax preparation sites will be available in the coming weeks through the Spilyay Tymoo and KWSO. If you are interested in volunteering at the preparation sites, contact Tracey Leslie at (541)553-3148. Training for volunteer preparers will be provided by the IRS.

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Tanner Yallup takes first elk

Could it be the first elk taken during the reservation rifle elk season? Tanner Yallup, 14, has his first elk, a nice 5x6. The bull is 40 inches wide with 47-inch main beams, and has an 18-inch-long eye guard. Tanner shot the elk with a 7mm Winchester Short Magnum at a distance of only 20 yards at 7:15 a.m. on opening day, Oct. 15. To top it off, an eagle feather was found lying on the ground near where the elk was taken. What a day!



Yallup with elk.

Workshop on beef nutrition

OSU Extension will host a beef nutrition workshop from 5 to 8 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 15 in Warm Springs.

For information, or to RSVP, call Fara Currim at 553-3238.

Dinner will be served. The goal of the workshop is to

provide information to folks who are in or who are interested in the beef production industry, with a focus on winter feeding of beef cattle. A beef nutrition workbook will be used interactively to customize ranch nutrition plans.

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