

HILLSDALE

DAILY NEWS

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CAA

1,400 residents benefit from VITA program

By Holly Roney
HILLSDALE COUNTY

— Each year the Hillsdale County Community Action Agency (CAA) offers their Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to help low-income residents file taxes. This year, nine tax preparers and six administrative volunteers spent over 1,100 hours with the VITA program. They helped over 1,400 Hillsdale County residents prepare and file their income taxes for free, totaling over \$978,000 in credits and refunds. “That money all goes to people who will hopefully spend the dollars in Hillsdale County to create local economic benefit,” said Hillsdale County CAA Director Maxine Vanlerberg said.

Any resident with a 2011 household income of \$50,000 or less is eligible to have their taxes prepared and filed for free with VITA. The VITA volunteers are certified and trained by CAA to prepare and file federal, state and city taxes, as well as file for the Earned Income Tax, Child Tax, Home Heating and Homestead Property Tax credits — all for free! “We do this because a lot of the folks we help wouldn’t file their taxes otherwise,” Vanlerberg explained. “If their income is under \$50,000, they’re not required to. Or it costs them more money to file than what they would get back. A lot of them can’t afford the fees to file.” CAA partners with other area organizations including the Hillsdale County Community Foundation, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale Senior Services Center and more to provide further services and support. These organizations help by providing volunteers, publicity, locations to train volunteers, and more.

Volunteers are recruited in the fall and don’t need experience filing taxes. CAA provides free training and the volunteers must pass an IRS test to become certified. Other volunteers are always appreciated for greeting and administrative work.

Sept. 30 Deadline

The deadline to file for the 2011 Michigan Home Heating Credit is Sept. 30, 2012. Call CAA to make an appointment or seek year-round tax preparation help at 517-437-3346.