



LENAWEE UNITED WAY

## Free tax preparation services available

By Diane Bach

Is your household income less than \$51,000? If so, you could take advantage of the free tax preparation services provided at Community Action Agency.

Are you thinking “I don’t have to file taxes because...”? While it may be true you do not have to file a federal tax return, you may be missing out on some state credits. If you own your home you may be eligible for Homestead Property Tax Credits. If you own your home or even if you rent, you may be eligible for a Home Heating Credit.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is an Internal Revenue Service sponsored program that has been in existence since 1969. Community Action Agency (CAA) has provided the service in Lenawee County since 2004. CAA provides this service for individuals who meet the one and only qualification — household income of less than \$51,000 — in Lenawee, Hillsdale and Jackson counties. CAA trains volunteers who then are required to pass IRS tests to become certified in order to prepare taxes as a VITA volunteer.

Volunteers will meet individually with you to ensure they know all of your information so they are able to file all of the forms necessary for you to receive all of the money you are entitled to receive. Volunteers are able to complete the federal, state and city (where applicable) returns as well as any tax credits including the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit, Home Heating Credits, Child Tax Credits, Homestead Property Tax Credits and other available credits. All at no charge.

All returns can be electronically filed (e-filed) with the refunds being direct deposited into your savings or checking account. This allows taxpayers to receive their money in about 10-14 days. CAA tax volunteers are available year-round should questions arise after tax season.

Last year, 31 volunteers in Lenawee County completed returns for 2,235 households; all returns are prepared by appointment only. CAA serves families, individuals, seniors, veterans, students — anyone with a household income less than \$51,000. If you want to schedule an appointment call the Lenawee County CAA office at 263-7861 or 800-438-1845, or call 211. The 211 operator will be able to tell you all of the documents you need.

CAA partners with many agencies in Lenawee County, including the Lenawee County Department on Aging. Seniors may also call the LCDA at 264-5280 for a tax appointment *Diane Bach is the community outreach manager and Lenawee deputy director for Community Action Agency.*

