



More than \$9.3 million in tax credits, refunds to come to 11,000 residents through Community Action Agency's free tax preparation program

By Tarryl Jackson June 21, 2013



Volunteer Faith Rueckert, helps a resident with her taxes during the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the Ayieko Resource Center, 410 E. High Street in Jackson, Thursday, June 20. Rueckert has been a volunteer with the center for the past eight years. (Andrew Kuhn | MLive.com)

JACKSON, MI – More than \$9.3 million in tax credits and refunds came to about 11,000 residents in Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale Counties this tax season through the Community Action Agency's **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program**. The program provides free income tax help to households with 2012 earnings of up to \$51,000. Volunteers are certified and trained to prepare and file tax returns and credits for qualified residents.

This tax season, 93 volunteers put in 10,238 hours into the program, which has an annual budget of about \$60,000 in Jackson County. The program is funded by a community service block grant, the U.S.

Department of Treasury/Internal Revenue Service, United Way of Jackson County, Consumers Energy Foundation, Hillsdale Community Foundation and Walmart Foundation. "I think, in general, the program has a good reputation of good service," said Diane Bach, community outreach coordinator for the nonprofit. "Tax law is hard to understand, and the people that don't have the money to pay for it appreciate the service in the VITA program. It meets many people's needs."

For the 2012 tax year, 3,774 Jackson County households received services through the VITA program. This

represents 5,683 individuals in the county, Bach said. More than \$4.7 million in tax credits and refunds came back to those residents. "Our clients tell us that they spend the money locally," she said. "A lot of the clients say they use it to pay property taxes, everyday expenses. I've had several older clients say they use it to pay for medical expenses. It's certainly a boost to the local economy." Brooklyn resident Faith Rueckert has been a volunteer for the VITA program for eight years. She said often clients are surprised by how many tax credits they are eligible for. These include federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit, child tax credit, homestead property tax credit and home heating credit. "We have so many people that do not understand taxes," Rueckert said. "The people are in so much need." Volunteers prepare taxes for clients year-round at the Ayieko Resource Center at Cooper and High streets.

For more information about the VITA program, call 517-784-4800 or (800) 491-0004.
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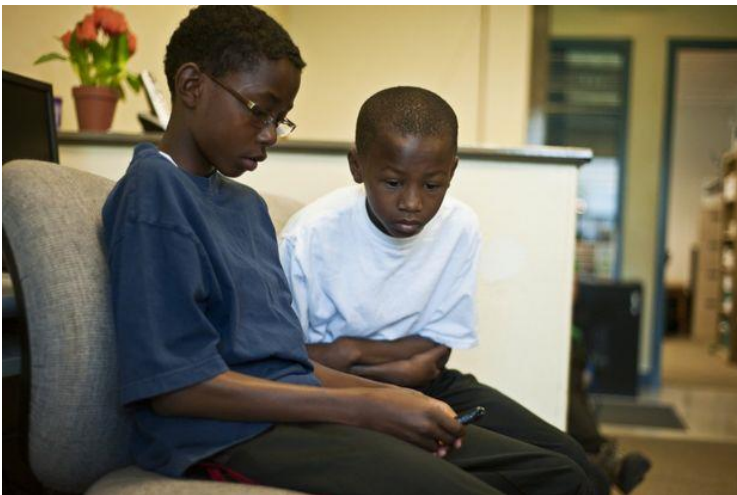
Wayne County resident Sonny Woodruff, receives help from volunteer Jim Benedict, with the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the Ayieko Resource Center, 410 E. High Street in Jackson, Thursday, June 20. Benedict has been a volunteer for the past two years. (Andrew Kuhn | MLive.com)



Jackson resident Anita Bryant, receive help from volunteer and Lenawee County resident, Faith Rueckert with the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the Ayieko Resource Center, 410 E. High Street in Jackson, Thursday, June 20. Rueckert has been volunteering with the center for the past eight years. (Andrew Kuhn | MLive.com)



A Jackson resident waits to receive help from volunteers with the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the Ayieko Resource Center, 410 E. High Street in Jackson, Thursday, June 20. (Andrew Kuhn | MLive.com)



Ypsilanti residents Kaheem, left, and Kori Wright, play the game Brick Attack on a cell phone while waiting for Sonny Woodruff of Wayne County to receive help from volunteers with the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the Ayieko Resource Center, 410 E. High Street in Jackson, Thursday, June 20. (Andrew Kuhn | MLive.com)



Jackson resident Anita Bryant, receives help from volunteer and Jackson resident Jim Benedict with the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the Ayieko Resource Center, 410 E. High Street in Jackson, Thursday, June 20. (Andrew Kuhn | MLive.com)