

HILLSDALE

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CAA looking for volunteer tax preparers

By **AMY BELL**
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The Hillsdale Community Action Agency is seeking volunteers to help with free income tax preparation.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assis-

tance program provides free tax preparation to families and individuals whose annual household income is up to \$49,000. Volunteers are needed to greet and register taxpayers, file for tax credits and prepare returns and to translate for clients who do not speak English.

Volunteers receive free, IRS-sanctioned instruction and training materials during their training in January.

"The number of households we can do is driven directly by the number of volunteers," said Diane

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Bach, CAA spokesperson. "The more volunteers we have, the more we can do."

According to a press release, in Hillsdale County alone, 10 volunteers helped 620 households which brought \$650,000 of refunds into the county in 2009.

"We'd like to get it over 1 million," she said.

According to the same release, last year, the program had 103 volunteers throughout Lenawee, Jackson and Hillsdale counties. The volunteers donated more than 7,000 hours to help 5,472 households file their 2009 taxes, raising

more than \$6.8 million dollars.

The agency is trying to draw attention to a number of available credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, she said.

Bach said 20 to 25 percent of people who are eligible do not receive it. The credit is available to taxpayers who meet a number of criteria such as household income and the number of people living in the household, she said. Individuals can apply for the credit from both the state and federal government.

One of the most important factors is the person must be working in order to be eligible to receive the credit, she said.

The agency also tries to work with senior citizens

On the net

www.caajlh.org

who may not be aware of credits that are available.

Bach said many seniors think they do not have to file taxes but if they do not, they may be missing out on the home heating credit or the homestead property credit.

"If they don't file for those credits from the state, they are missing out on that money," she said.

Those interested in volunteering or more information about the program can contact the Hillsdale Community Action Agency at 517-437-3346 or 1-800-750-9300.