



# Safety Net Responses: Maintaining and Strengthening Tax Credits to Reduce Poverty

January 30, 2019  
1:00 – 2:30 PM EST



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

# Welcome

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- James Butler, Family Assistance Program Specialist, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), Administration for Children and Families (ACF)



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# Learning Objectives

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- ❑ Understand the roles of tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC).
- ❑ Identify strategies to maintain, leverage, and strengthen these tax credits to benefit working families.
- ❑ Explore methods of raising awareness around the EITC and the CTC.



# Using GoToWebinar

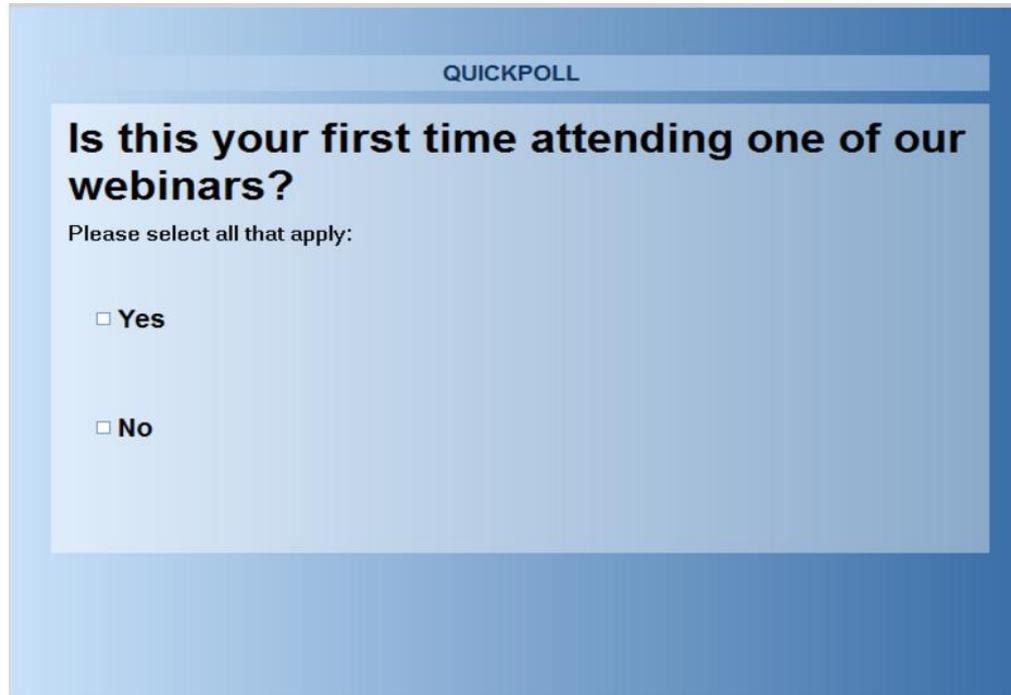


A screenshot of the GoToWebinar interface. The window has a menu bar with 'File', 'View', and 'Help'. Below the menu bar are two panels: 'Audio' and 'Questions'. The 'Audio' panel shows 'Telephone' and 'Mic &amp; Speakers' options, with 'Mic &amp; Speakers' selected. A 'MUTED' indicator and a volume slider are visible. The 'Questions' panel is highlighted with a red border and contains a text input field with the placeholder '[Enter a question for staff]' and a 'Send' button. At the bottom of the window, the text 'Webinar Housekeeping' and 'Webinar ID: 275-918-366' is displayed, along with the 'GoToWebinar' logo.

## Your Participation

Please submit your text questions and comments using the Questions panel.

# GoToWebinar: Responding to Polls

A screenshot of a GoToWebinar poll interface. The poll is titled "QUICKPOLL" and asks the question "Is this your first time attending one of our webinars?". Below the question, it says "Please select all that apply:". There are two radio button options: "Yes" and "No".

QUICKPOLL

**Is this your first time attending one of our webinars?**

Please select all that apply:

Yes

No

To respond to the poll, click the radio button next to your preferred response.



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# Polling Question #1

- How familiar are you with the tax credits available to low-income families and their eligibility requirements?
  - a) Very familiar
  - b) Somewhat familiar
  - c) Somewhat unfamiliar
  - d) Very unfamiliar



# Poll Question #2

- How would you rate your clients' familiarity with the tax credits available to them?
  - a) Very familiar
  - b) Somewhat familiar
  - c) Somewhat unfamiliar
  - d) Very unfamiliar



# Presenter

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- *Sara Johnson, MSW, Co-Founder & COO, CASH Campaign of Maryland*



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*Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*

**CASH**  
**CAMPAIGN**  
OF MARYLAND

Sara Johnson, Co-Founder / COO

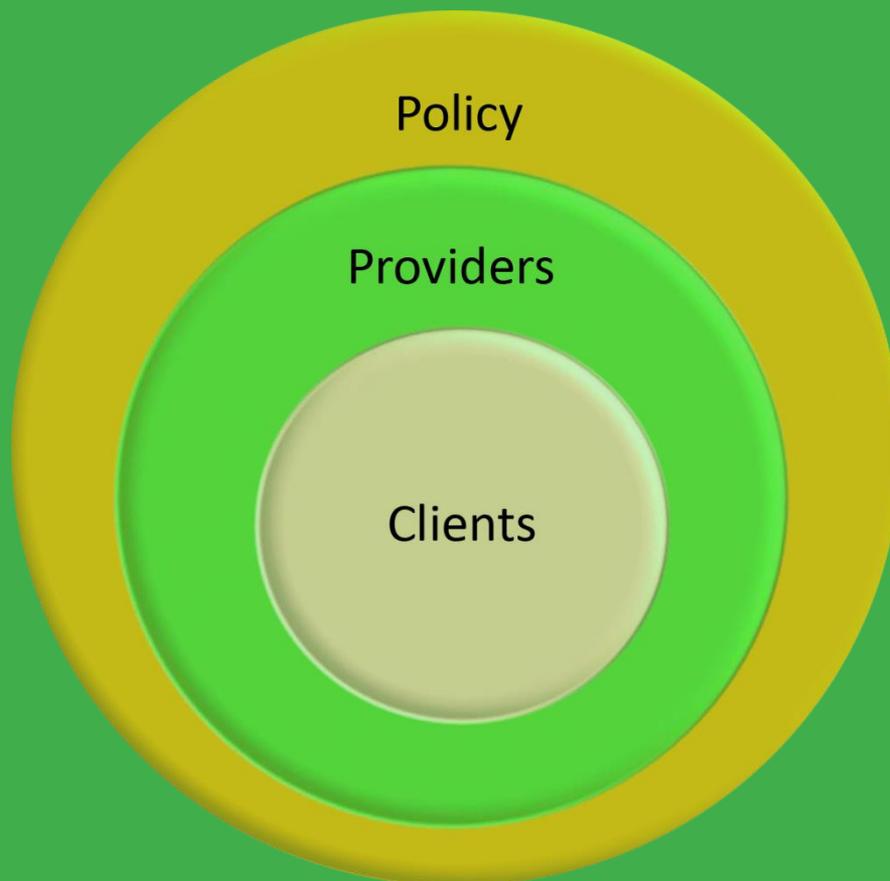
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January 30, 2019

# Mission

The CASH Campaign of Maryland — *Creating Assets, Savings and Hope* — promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission by operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability.

# How we work



*Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*

# Economic Impact of the EITC in Maryland



- Over 425,000 households benefit from the EITC.
- 115,000 Marylanders are lifted out of poverty by the EITC & CTC, including 58,000 children, each year.
- Policy-induced \$1000 increase in the EITC leads to a 7.3 percentage point increase in employment.
- Has reduced need for TANF.
- Refunds spent locally - \$1 : \$1.24 return on investment.
- Increases Maryland's economy by over \$931 million.
- Average family in Baltimore receives \$2,444 in Federal EITC.
- IRS indicates that 25% of households who are entitled to the EITC do not claim their credit; in Baltimore City this results in an estimated \$50,147,337 unclaimed Federal EITC.

# Maryland EITC Policy

- ❑ *Last year:*
  - Eliminated the age restriction for claiming the Maryland EITC! 40,000 more filers under the age of 25 with no dependent can now claim the credit!
- ❑ *2019 Legislation: Making Work Pay for Single Filers:* Those left out include young veterans, youth aging out of foster care or transitioning out of homelessness, single men struggling to remain engaged in the workforce, and noncustodial parents.
- ❑ We propose expanding Maryland's EITC for single filers by:
  - Increasing the income phaseout to 200% of the federal poverty level, and
  - Matching the state EITC to 100% of the federal EITC (up to \$519!).

# Free Tax Prep

Services provided across Maryland

**22,933** Federal & State Returns Filed



**715** Volunteer Tax Preparers

**38,851** Volunteer Hours



**\$34,487,026** Federal & State Refunds

**\$4,036,208** Fees Saved



**45** VITA sites across **19** counties

## Education, Coaching, and Volunteers



### Financial Education

7,836 participants  
422 workshops



### Financial Coaching

139 participants  
\$6,341 saved  
\$4,852 debt paid

### 80 Financial Capability Volunteers



Coaches (92.50%)

Educators (7.50%)

# Asset Development at Tax Time



## Training:

- Community Resource Navigators
- Tax Volunteers
- Partners

## Financial Products:

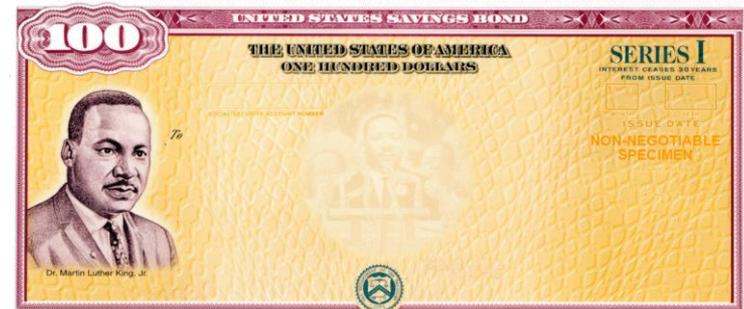
- Real time work to connect them to saving, safe financial products

## Referrals:

- Benefits screening
- Financial coaching
- Credit counseling
- Financial education classes
- Housing, legal, etc.

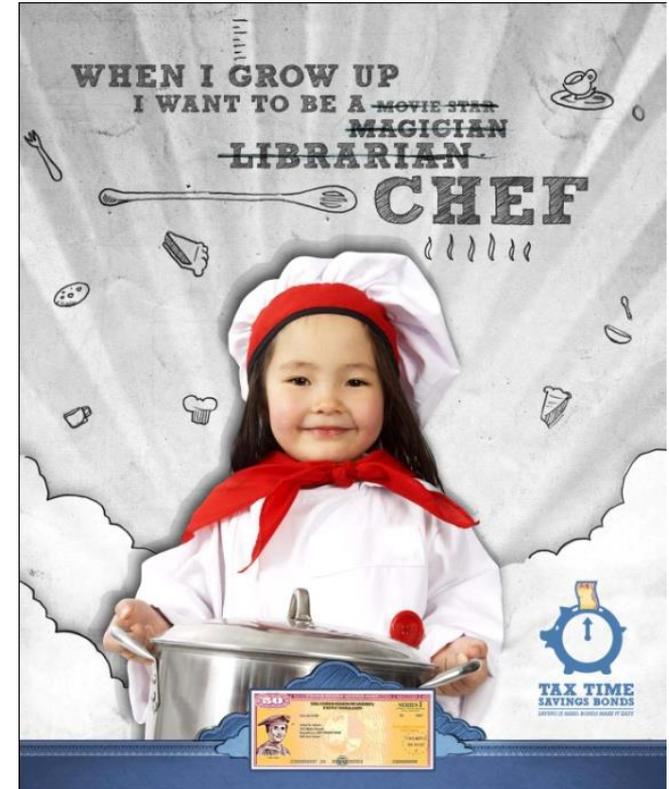
# The Products

**SAVE YOUR REFUND**  
**SAVE SMALL ★ WIN BIG**  
PRESENTED BY D2D FUND



# Incentives

- ❑ Scratch Off Tickets:
  - CASH Branded Scratch Off Tickets
  - Used Raffle Rules to do this
  - All tax clients that split refund or purchased a bond had a chance to win cash (\$5) instantly.
  - Created a buzz and excitement – made talking about saving easy and fun!
  
- ❑ Highest percentage site in bond promotion receives \$2,000 grant and a pizza party



SaveYourRefund (SYR) is a national promotion to incentivize tax-time saving

**SAVEYOURREFUND**  
**SAVE SMALL ★ WIN BIG**  
PRESENTED BY D2D FUND

**101** chances to WIN!

All you need to do: Save a minimum of \$50 of your federal tax refund.

**Weekly Drawings**

10 entries are drawn each  
week for **\$100**



**Grand Prize**

1 winner from the photo  
contest will win **\$25,000**

**\$35,000 in total prizes!**

**SAVEYOURREFUND**  
**SAVE SMALL ★ WIN BIG**  
PRESENTED BY D2D FUND

*Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*



# Working with Social Service Organizations

## □ Financial Education:

- Training the workforce on financial basics (credit, budgeting, debt)
  - American Job Centers
  - TANF providers
  - Financial Social Work
- Financial Education for TANF recipients. Embedding training into their work requirements is fundamental to their success.

# Lessons Learned / Tips

1. Tax time is a natural moment to work with people around their finances but it takes effort to get everyone on board!
2. Make saving fun!
3. Practitioners (job developers, social workers, case workers, etc.) need financial education and support to work with clients around their finances.
4. Financial capability work needs to be INTEGRATED into the day to day program to support low and moderate income people.

# Poll Question #3

- What do you think is the average EITC a family **with** children receives?
- a) \$357
  - b) \$2,365
  - c) \$3,176
  - d) \$4,009



# Poll Question #4

- What do you think is the average EITC an individual or family **without** children receives?
- a) \$295
  - b) \$357
  - c) \$405
  - d) \$680



# Presenter

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- *Gloria Aftanski*, President and Chief Professional Officer,  
United Way of Central Jersey

Direct Link to Program:

<https://www.uwcj.org/volunteer-income-tax-assistance>



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# UWCJ Programs/Services and Promoting Tax Credits

Gloria Aftanski • 01.30.2019



# Overview

- **UWCJ Programs and Services**
  - Promoting tax credits, conducting outreach to low-income families and individuals, and connecting to free tax preparation services.
- **Lessons Learned and Key Tips for Other Programs**

# United Way of Central Jersey (UWCJ)

***A non-profit organization in service  
to the 830,300 residents of  
Middlesex County***

## Mission:

United Way of Central Jersey provides leadership to create opportunities for a better life for people living or working in our community who are needy, at risk and vulnerable.

We achieve this by mobilizing people, organizations and financial resources to create and sustain programs that achieve targeted outcomes and lasting change through volunteerism, partnerships, services and advocacy.



# Overview of UWCJ Programs and Services

United Way of Central Jersey's investment priority includes evidence-based primary preventive services for vulnerable children ages 0-5 and their family support including:

- Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)
- Parent Child Home Program (PCHP)
- Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors (APOD)



# VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)



## VITA

- The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program with United Way of Central Jersey offers free tax help to people who generally make \$64,000 or less, persons with disabilities and limited English speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns.
- IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.



# VITA at United Way of Central Jersey

- United Way of Central Jersey's VITA program launched in 2008 with 3 volunteer preparers certified at the beginner level who prepared 13 returns
- United Way assumed leadership for the Middlesex County VITA Coalition, increasing the number of Coalition partners, volunteers and prepared returns
- Six (6) preparers are now certified to prepare ITIN applications, important to our non-LPR residents

**UNITED WE FIGHT.  
UNITED WE WIN.**

**LIVE UNITED**

## 3-Yr VITA Metrics for Coalition

Tax Year	Returns	\$\$ Refunds	\$\$ EITC	\$\$ CTC
2017	2236	\$2,412,000	704,000	376,000
2016	2099	\$2,450,000	675,000	306,000
2015	2508	\$2,300,000	675,000	315,000

**UNITED WE FIGHT.  
UNITED WE WIN.**

**LIVE UNITED**

## Community Savings Tax Year 2017

**2,236 returns  
@\$250.00 = \$559,000**

### Tax Saving Initiative

Taxpayers setting aside part of their  
refund for future use.

**\$77,000**

**Total Savings \$636,000**



# Coalition Members

## New Brunswick

Anshe Emeth CDC  
Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen  
New Brunswick Public Library  
New Brunswick Senior Center  
Middlesex County College  
Rutgers University

## Piscataway

Senior Center  
Westergard Library

## Perth Amboy

Perth Amboy Adult School  
Perth Amboy Library  
Office of the Mayor  
Jewish Renaissance Foundation  
Jankowski Community Center  
Senior Center  
Community Child Care Solutions  
Bayside Family Success Center

## North Brunswick

North Brunswick Public Library

## Sayreville

Senior Center

## Edison

Edison Public Library

## Milltown

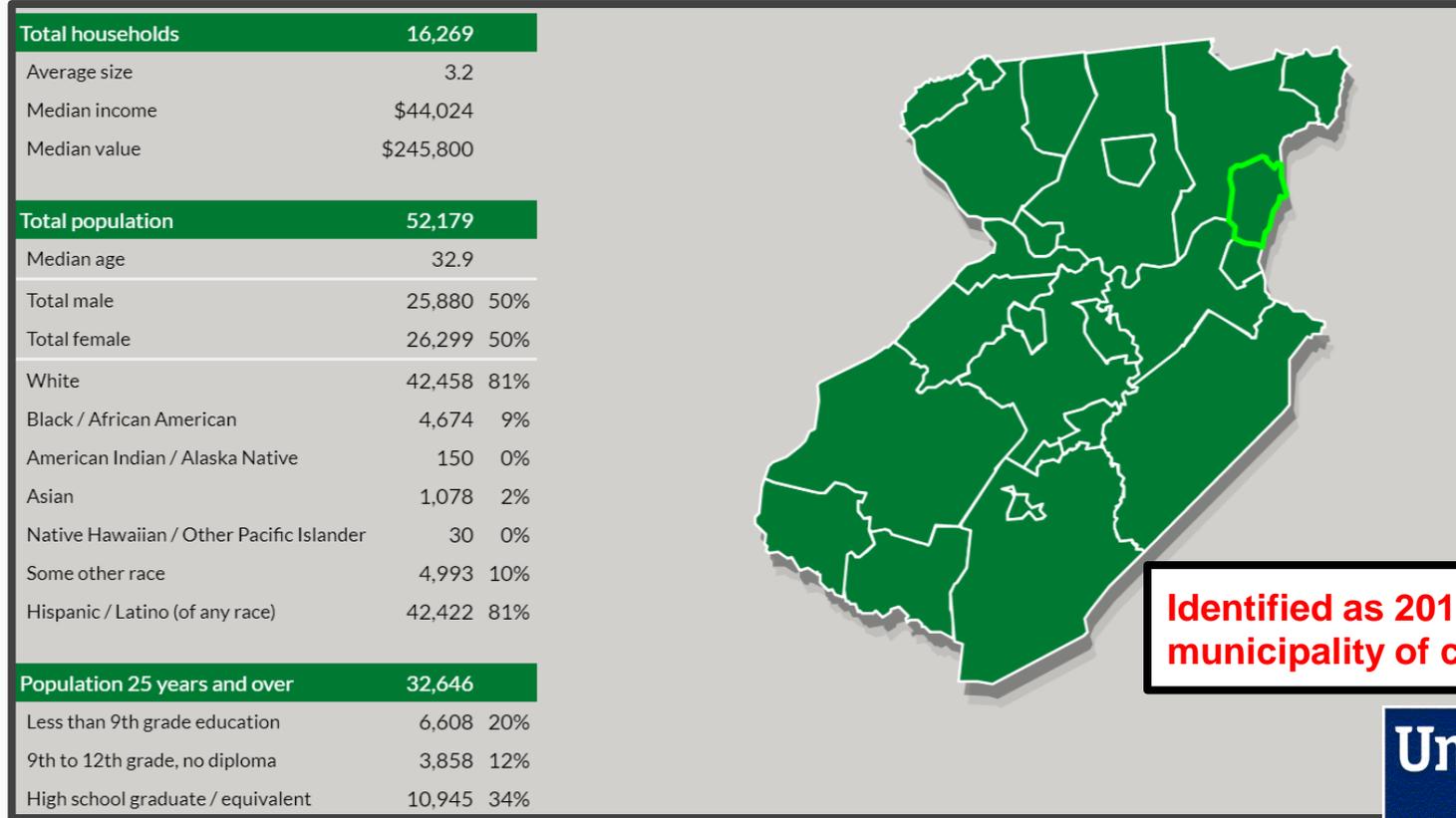
United Way of Central Jersey  
Office



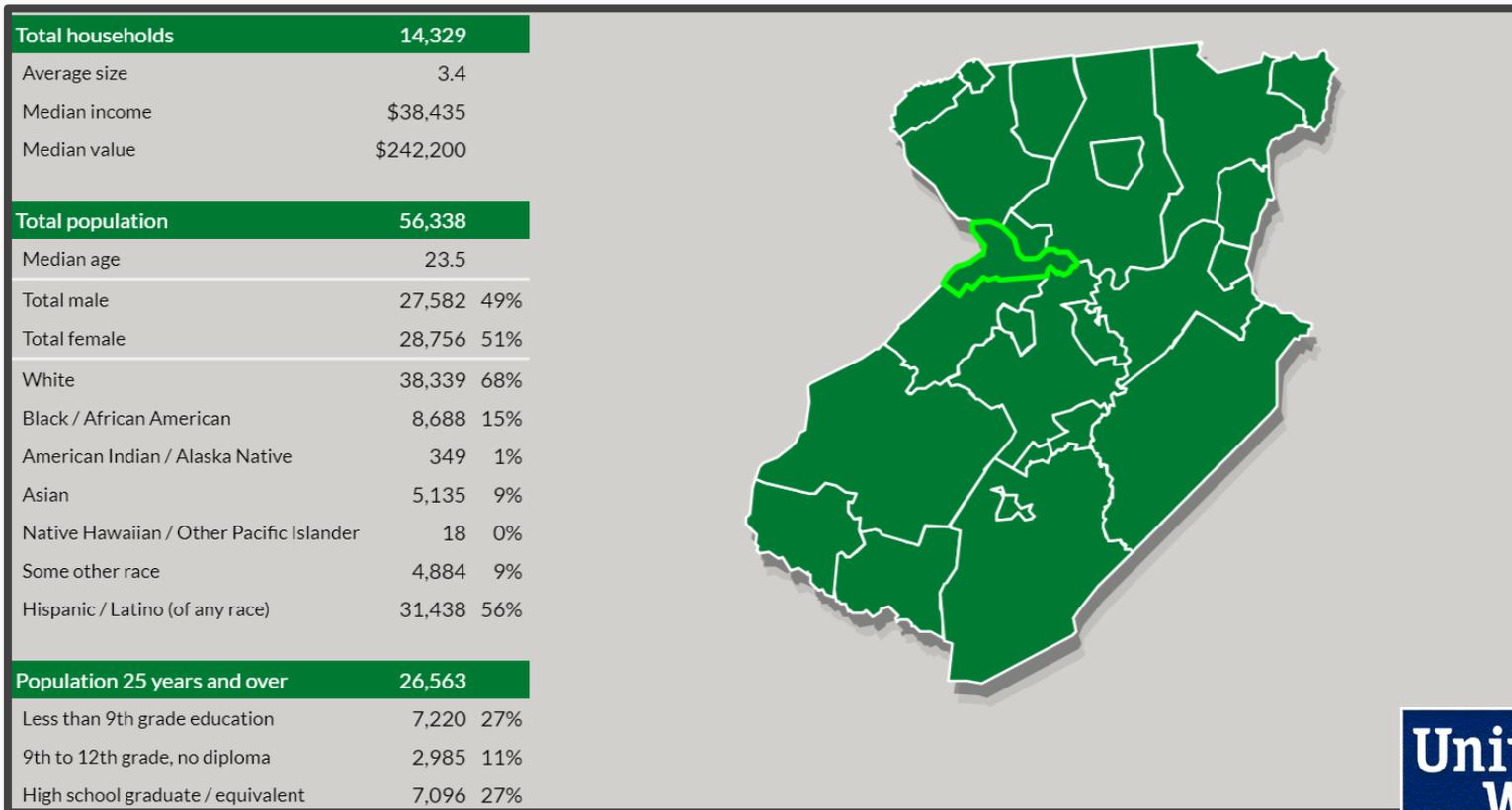
# Tax Return Preparation Options

- Face-to-Face
- Drop Off
- Facilitated Self-Assisted
- Events

# Perth Amboy



# New Brunswick



# Middlesex County

- Middlesex County has the highest number and percentage of households living at ALICE and in poverty of New Jersey's 21 counties: 283,661 households or 35%.
- New Brunswick and Perth Amboy rank 8 and 11 respectively, in terms of households below the ALICE threshold among New Jersey's largest cities and towns.
- New Brunswick and Perth Amboy rank 1 and 2 respectively, among Middlesex County's 25 municipalities in terms of % ALICE and poverty households.

# Paid Tax Preparation Statistics

**Based on the information provided by our IRS SPEC representatives for 2015 returns:**

- **Perth Amboy – 17,537 (80%) of low income returns filed used a paid preparer**
- **New Brunswick - 15,581 (78%) low income returns filed used a paid preparer**
- **Estimated cost for low income tax preparation at \$200 per return is:**

**\$6,623,600**

# Marketing Efforts

- Obtained support from Mayor Wilda Diaz.
- Outreached to major community non-profit organizations physically located in Perth Amboy to educate about VITA. Obtained commitment to promote VITA with clients.
- Met with Director of the Perth Amboy One Stop Career Center and Perth Amboy Adult High School.
- Visually appealing flyer created to promote Perth Amboy VITA locations.
- Conducted ITIN Workshop on **January 16<sup>th</sup>**.
- Tax-a-thon scheduled for **Saturday, February 9<sup>th</sup>** at the Community Center
- MLK Day of Service Walk to Distribute Financial Stability door hangers to targeted Perth Amboy households.
- Email to prior year VITA clients with all necessary documents (intake form, savings form, etc.).
- Created VITA Facebook.
- Dedicated VITA appointment telephone line.

# Flyers



## TALLER DEL NUMERO DE ITIN/ ITIN WORKSHOP

- ¿QUE? *Conozca los requisitos para obtener su número de ITIN para complementar sus planillas.*
- WHAT? *Learn about the ITIN number process and what you need to file income taxes.*
- ¿CUANDO?/WHEN? *16 de Enero de 2019  
January 16, 2019  
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.*
- ¿ADONDE? / WHERE? *56 Brighton Avenue, Perth Amboy, NJ 08861*

*Para más información o para registrarte llama al (732) 826-4800  
For more information or to register call (732) 826-4800*



**TAXATHON 2019  
FREE TAX HELP**  
**Saturday, February 9th, 9-3pm**  
at  
**Alexander F. Jankowski Community Center**  
**1 Olive Street**  
**Perth Amboy, NJ 08861**

**Call 732-247-3730 to make an appointment.**

What to Bring:	Other Deductible Expenses:
<b>Identification:</b> Photo ID for tax payer and Social Security cards or ITNs for all family members	Proof of mortgage interest and property taxes Charitable donations and other tax-deductible expenses
<b>Income:</b> W-2, 1099 and any other income-related documents. Copy of last-year's tax return - if available	College expenses: In addition to Form 1098T from your college, bring records of expenses paid for tuition, books, fees and supplies
<b>Bank Account Information</b> Checking and savings account numbers and bank routing number to direct deposit your refund.	<b>Proof of Health Insurance Coverage:</b> Had Insurance through the marketplace, bring your 1095-A
<b>Childcare Expenses</b> Total paid to daycare provider and the provider's tax ID	Kids Corner and Refreshments

**SPONSORED  
BY PNC BANK**



## Free Tax Preparation Helps Savings Grow



For those with income less than \$65,000, this free service helps you:

- SAVE LITTLE BY LITTLE
- WATCH YOUR SAVINGS GROW!

Save to win a \$25 ShopRite Gift Card.

Let your Preparer know what you want to save for: Why Save & Ways to Save!

### SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Already have a checking account? Let your bank know that you need a SAVINGS ACCOUNT too! It is needed to participate in the offers below.

### SAVERLIFE

<https://www.saverlife.org/>

Boost your savings account by joining SaverLife! For each month that you keep a minimum of \$20 in your Savings account, SaverLife will match your savings with \$10 up to six months. That's \$60 just for saving your own money!

### AMERICA SAVES

<https://americasaves.org/for-savers/participate-in-asw>

Join millions of Americans in making the pledge to SAVE this tax season! It all starts when you make a commitment to yourself to save. Taxpayers setting aside as little as \$20 in their savings account are eligible to enter a promotion for the chance to win one of 100 prizes of \$100. Taxpayers may also enter the photo contest for a chance to win one of two grand prizes of \$10,000.

### FREE PNC DEBIT CARD

No Bank Account? Let your Preparer know that you want your tax refund on a VISA debit card. Using a check cashing store will cost you 2.4% of your refund!

Save at Tax Time! Save 5%, 10% or \$20 of YOUR REFUND. Save Little by Little & Watch Your Savings Grow over time. We are all better off when we are financially stable. It starts with SAVINGS! See a list of IRS Free Tax Sites: <https://bit.ly/2VPwXkQ> or call 732 247-3727.

Savers will be entered in a Weekly drawing for a \$25 ShopRite gift card!



## Get Your Tax Refund Fast! E-Filed, Free & IRS Approved



You can get your taxes done for free by IRS-certified volunteers at locations throughout the community. Income up to \$65,000 (single).

The free tax sites also help eligible taxpayers claim important tax credits and refunds. Over 2,000 returns filed in 2018!

You may qualify for:

- **The Earned Income Tax Credit**
- **Increased - Child Tax Credit - \$2,000**
- **New - Other Dependent Credit - \$500**

Get your tax return prepared at these locations:

### Call to schedule an appointment:

Alexander F. Jankowski  
Community Center  
1 Olive Street  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
Tel: (732) 826 1690  
Feb. 9 & 23

Hansen Building  
415 Fayette Street  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
(732) 247-3727  
Evening drop off

Jewish Renaissance Foundation  
149 Kearny Avenue  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
Tel: 732 324-2114 ext. 111

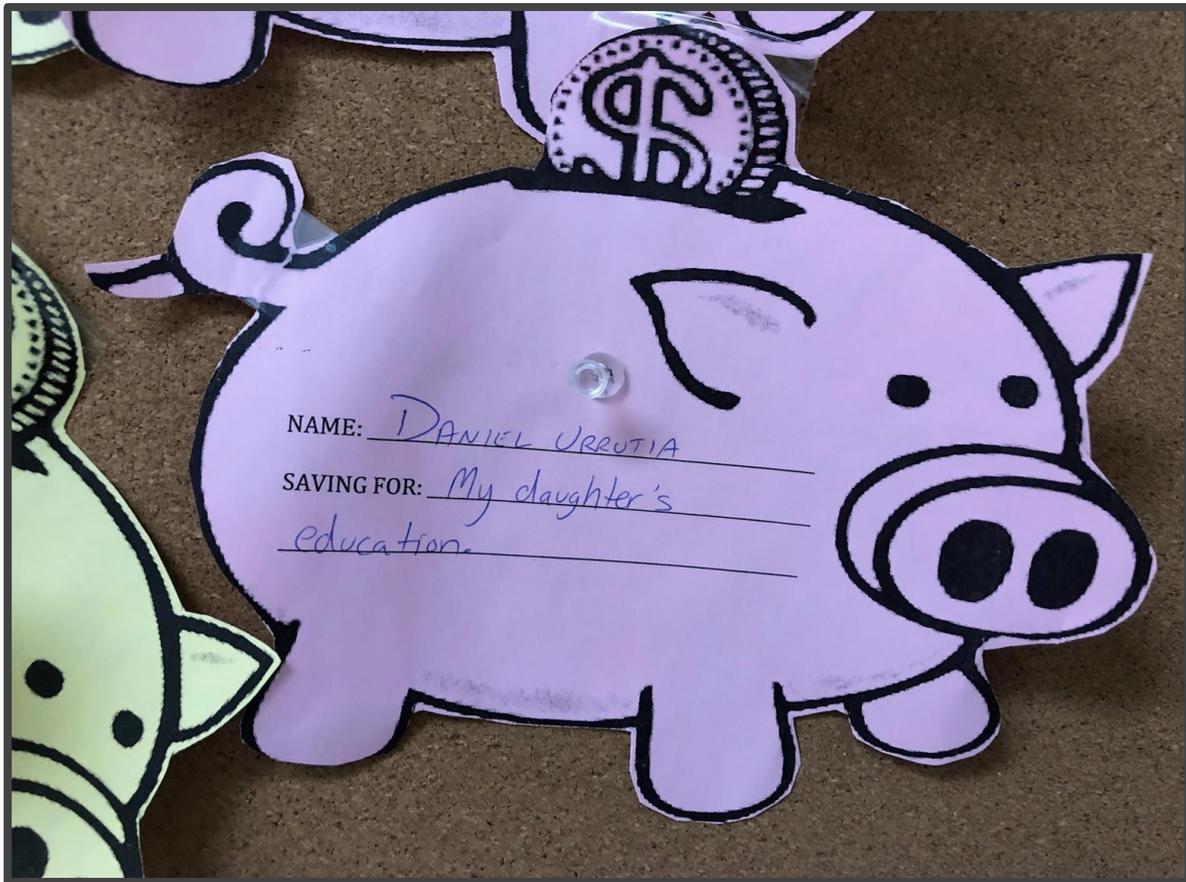
Child Care Solutions  
103 Center Street  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
Tel: 732 324-4357  
Evening drop off

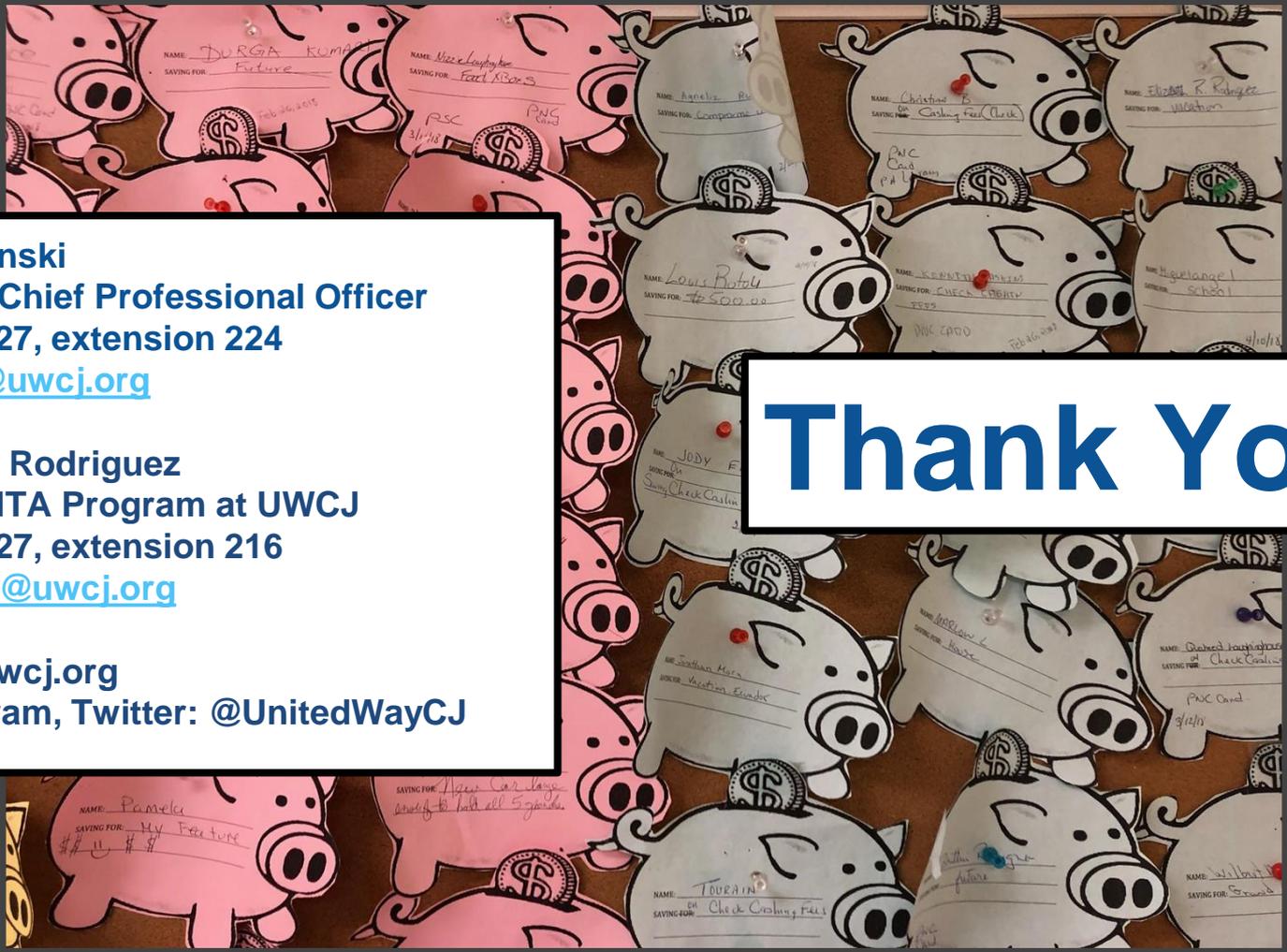
Perth Amboy Library  
196 Jefferson Street  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
Tel: 732 826-2600  
Saturday only

Bayside Family Success Center  
500 Dobranski Drive  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
Tel: 732 638-5063 ext. 104



# Client Notes





**Gloria Aftanski**  
**President, Chief Professional Officer**  
732.247.3727, extension 224  
[gaftanski@uwcj.org](mailto:gaftanski@uwcj.org)

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**Charmaine Rodriguez**  
**Director, VITA Program at UWCJ**  
732.247.3727, extension 216  
[crodriguez@uwcj.org](mailto:crodriguez@uwcj.org)

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**Website: [uwcj.org](http://uwcj.org)**  
**FB, Instagram, Twitter: @UnitedWayCJ**

**Thank You!**

# Presenter

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- *Vena Stevens*, Program Director, Asset Building and Outreach, Gateway EITC Community Coalition of St. Louis



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# Gateway EITC Community Coalition (GECC)

Gateway EITC Community Coalition

Vena Stevens, MSW

[www.gatewayeitc.org](http://www.gatewayeitc.org) 314-539-4078



# GECC Background

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- Providing free income tax preparation for low income families since 2002
- More than 88,000 federal returns over 16 tax seasons
- 8,842 federal returns in 2018

# GECC Services

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- Free tax preparation
- Saving and asset-building
- Access to mainstream financial products and services
- Education and Outreach

# Tax Preparation

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- Saturday walk-in sites
- Weekday appointment sites
- In-home service for shut-ins
- Missouri Property Tax Credit Claims

# Asset Building

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- Direct deposit
- Refund splitting
- Savings bonds
- Information on college savings accounts

# Mainstream Financial Products

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- Low cost, low risk bank accounts
- Check cashing letter
- Credit reports
- Credit counseling
- Budgeting

# Education and Outreach

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- Financial education
- Resource fairs
- Marketing

# Lessons Learned

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- Collaboration
  - Marketing
  - Volunteers
  - Training
  - Site locations

# Additional Resources/Links

**EITC Central is a Comprehensive Resource:** <https://www.eitc.irs.gov/>

- **EITC Assistant:** Used to determine eligibility, and also to estimate the amount of credit you will receive:
  - <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/use-the-eitc-assistant>
- **Tax Preparer Toolkit**
  - <https://www.eitc.irs.gov/tax-preparer-toolkit/welcome-to-the-tax-preparer-toolkit>
- **Spreading the word: EITC and Social Media**
  - <https://www.eitc.irs.gov/eitc-central/social-media-and-eitc/social-network-and-eitc>
- **State-Level Statistics**
  - State Beneficiaries and Value: <https://www.eitc.irs.gov/eitc-central/statistics-for-tax-returns-with-eitc/statistics-for-tax-returns-with-eitc>
  - EITC Participation Rate, per State: <https://www.eitc.irs.gov/eitc-central/participation-rate/eitc-participation-rate-by-states>



# Additional Resources/Links

Short Informational Video on the EITC, created by the Get It Back Campaign

- <https://www.eitcoutreach.org/blog/eitc-video/>

Does Your State Provide Additional EITC?

- <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/state-fact-sheets-the-earned-income-and-child-tax-credits>

Child Tax Credit

- <https://www.eitcoutreach.org/learn/tax-credits/child-tax-credit/>

Short, Intermediate, and Long-Term Impacts of EITC

- CLASP 2017 Publication:  
<https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/10/Research%20shows%20long-lasting%20benefits%20of%20EITC.pdf>



# No-Cost Tax Preparation Resources

## **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE):**

- VITA provides free tax help to those who make \$55,000 or less, those with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency
- TCE focuses on individuals 60 years of age and older, specializing in questions regarding pensions and retirement
- Free Tax Provider Locator: <https://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/>

## **AARP's Tax-Aide:**

- 5,000 locations nationwide
- Site Locator Tool:  
<https://secure.aarp.org/applications/VMISLocator/searchTaxAideLocations.action>

## **What to Bring to Local Tax Preparation Centers:**

- <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/checklist-for-free-tax-return-preparation>



# Discussion



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# Q&A



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# Additional Information

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- OFA PeerTA website (<http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov>)
- Webinar transcript and recording
- Future webinar topics (peerta@icf.com)



# Webinar Feedback

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- Please remember to provide your feedback using the brief survey that will launch when the webinar ends.



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