

SAMPLE ARTICLE FOR NEWSLETTERS, LISTSERVS AND EMAIL ALERTS

Tax season is only a few weeks away and free tax sites, VITA sites, will begin opening doors in under three weeks! This year several tax credits have been expanded to help put as much as \$6,000 in the pockets of low-income working families. In particular, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) are powerful resources for working people with low incomes.

In 2008, 24 million claimed over \$49 billion in EITC credit. The 2009 tax year marks a new year with the American Recover and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) which created many new tax policies. Several tax credits have been increased including EITC and the CTC.

Two new credits will put more money in the hands of low-income families including the Making Work Pay Credit and the New American Opportunity Credit which helps low income workers pay for college. With new and existing tax opportunities many more people will qualify for benefits than in previous years. To find out more information on EITC visit: <http://www.eitc.irs.gov/>

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites are IRS sponsored programs that offer low-income working families (joint income under \$49,000) free tax preparation. VITA sites are located across the country and are available so that low-income individuals do not have to pay for tax preparation or purchase products such as Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs). RALs are high-interest loans designed to give tax filers a “quick refund.” RAL interest rates have been reported up to 500% and can ultimately cost the tax filer hundreds if not thousands of dollars. To help protect your clients from these predatory practices encourage them to have their taxes prepared for free at a local VITA site. To find the closest VITA site call: 1-800-906-9887 or visit <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=107626,00.html>.

With all of the credits available for working families it is critical to promote tax assistance. Over the next several months it is vital to inform your clients about these tax credits and free tax assistance. By visiting <http://eitcoutreach.org/> you will be able to print or order free flyers, posters, handouts, and access to an outreach strategy guide.