



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 10, 2015

**CONTACT:** Kate Brewster

401-486-9532

[kbrewster@economicprogressri.org](mailto:kbrewster@economicprogressri.org)

## **Free Tax Preparation Helps Working Families**

*Volunteers help low- and modest-income Rhode Islanders file their taxes and receive tax refunds bringing millions back into Woonsocket's economy*

**[Woonsocket]** – With tax season in full swing, local volunteers are helping working families in Woonsocket file their tax returns for free. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program allows millions of low- and modest-income taxpayers to prepare, complete, and file their federal and state tax returns at no cost, helping make sure they receive all the tax credits and deductions they deserve which boosts the local economy.

Community Care Alliance is one of several VITA sites in the area that not only provides free tax preparation and e-filing services, but also ensures that taxpayers receive tax credits for which they are eligible, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit.

“These tax credits make sure that these families aren’t paying more in taxes than they need to. The tax refunds they receive as a result help pay for the basics, like winter utility bills, car repairs, even school supplies, making a tangible impact on the lives of people in our community.” said Ben Lessing, President and CEO of Community Care Alliance.

“It is no different than any tax preparing agencies, individual or on-line tax preparing software,” said Paula McFarland, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Community Action Association. “Eligible Rhode Islanders can e-file with a certified tax preparer and received their refund within 7 - 10 days for free. More than 100 staff and volunteers give of their time to provide this free service,” said McFarland.

More than 4,300 tax filers in Woonsocket received more than \$10 million in federal EITC refunds in 2012.

More economic relief may be on the way.

Community organizations across the state are pushing hard to increase Rhode Island's EITC. The Ocean State is one of 25 states in the country that has its own credit. Currently the state EITC's value is 10% of the federal credit, but advocates are calling to increase it to 20% which would do more to help families that are working but struggling due to low-wages.

"Allowing workers to keep more of their paycheck through an increased state EITC is increasingly important since more and more people in Rhode Island work at low-wage jobs," said Kate Brewster, Executive Director of the Economic Progress Institute. "This tax credit offers these families a step up and a way out of poverty."

To be eligible for the EITC, you must work and pay taxes on your income. The tax credit lifts many kids out of poverty, and there is evidence that young children in families with enough income to cover basic necessities do better and go further in school and end up working and earning more when they become adults.

For more information about the EITC campaign and how to get more involved, you can reach the Economic Progress Institute at 401-456-2752.

####