

THE TAX PICTURE

Tax Tips To Save You Money

(NAPSA)—According to the IRS, more than 80 percent of American households pay a tax preparer or use tax software to prepare and file their taxes.

This tax season, you may not have to pay for either. You might be able to take advantage of free alternatives to for-profit tax preparation and filing, as well as qualify for valuable credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that could put \$5,650 back in your pocket.

Here Are Five Top Tax Tips:

1. Have your taxes prepared and filed free. If you earn less than \$49,000 annually, you're eligible for free tax preparation and filing services from an IRS-trained volunteer tax preparer at one of hundreds of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites nationwide. These sites, run by nonprofits like United Way, prepare more than 3 million returns annually. The Walmart Foundation is supporting 96 VITA sites across the country, helping return more than \$1 billion in tax refunds to nearly 1 million families. Last year, the partnership completed 970,000 tax returns, totaling \$1.6 billion in refunds plus saving \$190 million in paid tax preparer fees.

2. File your taxes online free. If you earn less than \$57,000 annually, you can file your federal and state taxes free online using www.myfreetaxes.com. United Way is partnering with the Walmart Foundation, One Economy and the National Disability Institute's Real Economic Impact Tour to increase the number of individuals and families that access this service. Walmart is also sponsor-



You may be eligible for free tax preparation services from a volunteer tax preparer.

ing the MyFreeTaxes.com mobile van tour, which trains people to complete and file their taxes online.

3. Estimate your tax return using a mobile phone app. Android, iPhone and Facebook users can estimate the amount of their tax return by entering some basic information. Visit <http://liveunited.org/freetaxprep> for more information. Standard text messaging rates apply.

4. File electronically to receive a faster refund. If you file your return electronically and opt to receive your refund via direct deposit, you can receive your refund seven to 10 days from the date that it is accepted by the IRS.

5. Learn the facts about Refund Anticipation Loans. A Refund Anticipation Loan, or RAL, is a bank loan arranged by a tax preparer, with fees as much as \$200–\$300.

How to Find Free Tax Preparation and Filing

Dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://liveunited.org/FreeTaxPrep> to find nearby VITA sites. You can also visit www.myfreetaxes.com.