

United Way Media Contact:
Sandy Young
J. Walcher Communications
sandy@jwalcher.com, 619-295-7140

2-1-1 San Diego Media Contact:
Camey Christenson
cchristenson@211sandiego.org
858-654-1999

United Way and 2-1-1 San Diego Receive California Grants to Expand Free Tax Preparation Program; Help Increase Refunds for County Residents

Last Year, More Than \$40 Million in State and Federal Refunds Received by Over 31,000 San Diegans

SAN DIEGO (Jan. 25, 2018) – **United Way of San Diego County** and **2-1-1 San Diego** announced today that they are partnering to leverage funds granted by the California Department of Community Services Development (CSD), to promote the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) and expand free tax preparation services. The two nonprofits are partnering with several other nonprofit organizations to help low- and moderate-income families prepare and file their 2018 taxes for free, and potentially add thousands of dollars to their refunds.

The two nonprofit organizations say their aim is to raise awareness and usage of the more than 60 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites countywide, as well as increase overall claims for state and federal EITCs that are available to eligible workers.

In 2018 (tax year 2017), United Way of San Diego County, 2-1-1 San Diego and many other San Diego County Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Coalition partners, supported and provided the public with access to 630 volunteers who provided free tax assistance to 31,092 residents and brought more than \$40 million in federal and state refunds back to working families in San Diego communities – largely due to Earned Income Tax Credits.

According to United Way President and CEO Nancy Sasaki, tax season can be confusing and many San Diegans are unaware of the resources and refunds available to them.

“Each year, too many hard-working San Diegans are missing out on hundreds or even thousands of dollars in tax refunds that they’ve earned,” said Sasaki. “These grants will help us connect with more local residents and share vital information about one of the nation’s most successful anti-poverty measures – the Earned Income Tax Credit.”

While some people may not associate tax season with improving a family’s bottom line, for more than 300,000 eligible San Diego residents, the EITC does just that, noted Sasaki. The EITC is a refundable state and federal tax credit that provides applicable households with significant refunds. In fact, she said, the maximum state and federal EITC refund is around \$9,000.

And while these tax credits can make big differences in a household budget, it’s not just about the additional income, said William York, executive vice president of 2-1-1 San Diego.

“Most low-income households are not able to afford access to a financial expert they can talk to about getting out of debt, choosing safe banking practices and services, or planning and saving for the future,” he said. “So, many families continue to struggle from paycheck to paycheck.”

York said the influx of new California EITC grant monies will allow 2-1-1 San Diego to expand outreach efforts to hundreds of thousands of eligible families countywide and schedule appointments for free tax preparation services. In addition to free tax preparations, he said filers at VITA sites can complete a benefit screening that can link them to other public benefit services. These screenings last tax season helped 1,480 families become aware of their potential eligibility status and provided them with instructions to apply for these benefits.

The San Diego County EITC Coalition is led by United Way of San Diego County and anchored by a partnership with the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency -Community Action Partnership and the IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication.

2-1-1 San Diego will facilitate its outreach efforts with partners Dreams for Change, International Rescue Committee (IRC), YMCA Childcare Resource Service, Child Development Associates and ElderHelp of San Diego. United Way’s CalEITC grant will expand the Coalition’s free tax assistance, in partnership with Dreams for Change and Interfaith Community Services.

To make an appointment for free tax preparation services, eligible families can call 2-1-1 or visit www.myfreetaxes.org.

About United Way of San Diego County

For 98 years, United Way of San Diego County has disrupted cycles of poverty by developing long-term solutions for children and families. United Way plays a unique role in the San Diego community, bringing people and resources together to spark breakthrough community action that elevates every child and family toward a brighter future.

Developing regional partnerships around effective practices, the organization makes measurable, significant change in the education and success of children from cradle to career and helps families have the support needed to ensure that success. United Way focuses on educational milestones, such as kindergarten readiness, third-grade literacy, high school preparation, and college and career pathways. Learn more at www.uwsd.org, the [blog](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About 2-1-1 San Diego

2-1-1 San Diego serves as a lifeline connecting San Diegans to more than 6,000 community, health and disaster support services, 24-hours a day in more than 200 languages, through a simple three-digit number, searchable online database and online chat. 2-1-1 San Diego’s Community Information Exchange (CIE) technology improves the lives and health outcomes of San Diego County residents through improved care coordination that unites information across community providers, making access to services seamless. For more information about 2-1-1 San Diego, visit www.211sandiego.org or follow them on Facebook @211sandiego or Twitter @211SD.

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