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**United Way accepts appointments for free tax preparation sites to help low-income individuals and families**

*26 locations available across region in 2017*

Pittsburgh, Pa. (January 23, 2017) – United Way of Southwestern PA, in partnership with the Money in Your Pocket Coalition (MIYPC), will offer free, in-person tax preparation across 26 sites to eligible individuals and families. Appointments can be made now; sites opened the week of January 16, 2017.

“Year after year, this campaign makes a huge impact on the lives of low-income families throughout our region,” said Angela Reynolds, United Way’s Director of PA 2-1-1 Southwest and Helping Families Thrive. “Our IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers help individuals secure earned tax credits and refunds. This money helps these families meet basic needs, such as putting dinner on the table or paying a utility bill.”

Among the credits available to low-income families is the Earned Income Tax Credit. The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual EITC Awareness Day will be held on Friday, January 27, 2017. The IRS and nationwide partners join together each year to launch the Awareness Day outreach campaign to ensure millions of workers secure the credit they earned. The EITC is earned by low- to moderate-income working individuals and families based on income and number of children and is one of the strongest tools to help people build financial self-sufficiency, keep people working and lead children into successful futures.

Last year throughout the region, Money in Your Pocket Coalition tax sites prepared tax returns for nearly 10,000 households, returning over \$15 million in total refunds back to Southwestern PA residents, including over \$6 million in Earned Income Tax Credits.

While improving access to the Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax benefits, the Coalition also works to connect households to other local resources for which they are eligible. When scheduling an appointment, households can get connected to valuable services that assist with childcare, transportation, emergency food, utility payments, healthcare enrollment, elderly care, and more. While helping individuals receive their EITC refunds is a primary focus of the Free Tax Prep program, it also serves as a way to connect community members to other services that can help them reach financial stability.

Appointments for free tax preparation can be made now by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting [www.pa211sw.org](http://www.pa211sw.org), the free, 24-hour health and human services helpline powered by United Way. 2-1-1 resource navigators will schedule free tax preparation appointments and make service referrals for the five counties in the MIYPC (Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland), and will serve as a resource for free tax preparation assistance for 11 counties throughout Southwestern PA. Households with a total annual income up to \$54,000 *may* qualify for free in-person tax preparation; free online tax assistance is available for individuals and families with a total annual income up to \$64,000.

**About United Way of Southwestern PA** – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

**About Money in Your Pocket Coalition** – The Money in Your Pocket Coalition (MIYPC) is a group of nonprofit and government agencies in southwestern PA who provide free tax preparation for low-and-moderate income individuals, families, and seniors. Since 2009, the Coalition has trained and mobilized hundreds of community volunteers during tax season to provide free, quality income tax preparation assistance to families. Beyond tax season, the Coalition partners offer year-round assistance for financially struggling adults and families.

The MIYPC is comprised of the following agencies, in partnership with the IRS, *PA 2-1-1 Southwest*, and United Way of Southwestern PA: Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Allegheny Valley Association of Churches, Community Action Southwest, Fayette County Community Action Agency, Goodwill of Southwestern PA/ Northside Common Ministries, Human Services Center Corporation, Just Harvest Education Fund, North Hills Community Outreach, Robert Morris University, Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA, Westmoreland Community Action, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh/ YMCA Hope for All.

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