

STCC, free tax preparation assistance

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. - Starting Jan. 24, Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) will once again offer free income tax filing assistance for low-to-moderate income taxpayers.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program will help STCC students and surrounding community residents prepare and file their basic federal and state tax returns. Tax help will be available by appointment from Wednesday, Jan. 24, through Saturday, April 14.

Administered through the School of Business and Information Technologies (SBIT), the service is available to area residents who make less than \$54,000 a year, including taxpayers who are disabled, limited English speaking and/or elderly. The program will help filers claim all available tax credits including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit, and Education credits.

"Through VITA, filers will get their refund just as fast as they would if they went to a commercial tax preparation company," said Janet Cummings, STCC's VITA site coordinator. "It can often cost as much as \$200 to \$300 to have an outside company prepare a family's taxes, but our program is free, so there's significant savings."

The program serviced over 135 returns during its first year and the number increased to over 740 returns last year, said Leona Ittleman, STCC dean of the School of Business and Information Technologies. As a result, the program - now in its fifth year at STCC - returned over \$1,601,000 in refunds and savings to the surrounding community.

Appointments are available Wednesdays through Fridays, 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The VITA office is located in Scibelli Hall (Building 2), Room 414.

"It's a friendly atmosphere," Cummings said. "It's a place to go where people will understand what folks are going through. At VITA, there's no sales promotion, no pressure. We're just here to help them do their taxes."

Anyone who would like to take advantage of the VITA program can learn more by visiting www.stcc.edu/vita or calling (413) 755-4215 for an appointment. If accommodations for a disability are required to participate in this service, please let the office know when making an appointment. It may take up to two weeks to accommodate some requests.

About Springfield Technical Community College

Founded in 1967 and located on 35 acres of the Springfield Armory National Historic Site, STCC is a major resource for the economic vitality of Western Massachusetts. As the only technical community college in Massachusetts, STCC, a designated Hispanic Serving Institution and an Achieving the Dream Leader College, offers a variety of career programs unequalled in the state. STCC's highly regarded transfer programs in business, engineering, liberal arts, science and technology continue to provide the most economical options for students pursuing a four-year degree. With an annual enrollment of more than 7,700 day, evening, weekend and online students, STCC is a vibrant campus rich in diversity.