

OP-ED

Bring returns as a volunteer

In these challenging times, you can give your time to low-income families and help them get what they really need: money!

As a volunteer tax preparer for the Campaign for Working Families, you can be part of a tremendous effort that brings \$20 million each year into the homes of working families and boosts the Philadelphia economy.

You can help families buy winter coats, pay back mortgage payments, utility bills and save for homeownership.

You can help keep money circulating in our local business economy. During the past seven years, more than 2,500 volunteers have provided free tax preparation in community settings throughout Philadelphia. These volunteers have brought \$124.2 million directly into the homes of low-income working families. And the volunteers have saved these families an estimated \$19 million in interest, fees and charges for tax preparation.

Volunteers can complete tax forms, greet customers, organize paperwork and assist with other administrative tasks. No experience is necessary.

Volunteer tax preparers will be trained by the campaign and certified by the Internal Revenue Service. The campaign provides free tax assistance at 12 community-based sites throughout Philadelphia. Families earning less than \$50,000 (in 2009) and individuals who earned less than \$25,000 (in 2009) are eligible for the campaign's services.



**GUEST
COMMENT**

Jean Hunt

Volunteering promises big returns to the volunteer and their customers. Suzette Adams, senior business analyst, Peco, was recognized as the 2009 Outstanding Volunteer by the Campaign. She volunteered at the CareerLink Northwest tax site in Germantown. "I do believe that I make a difference. In just a few hours I know that have saved my clients hundreds of dollars with free tax preparation services and also helped bring more than \$10,000 into our local economy."

New volunteers are assigned to work with a skilled site coordinator and other experienced volunteers. Volunteers are asked to work at a local tax site in Philadelphia, a minimum of six sessions between Jan. 25 and April 15. Sessions are three to four hours weekdays, weeknights or Saturdays.

The campaign is the largest free tax program in Pennsylvania and one of the top five nationally, delivering service to 10,000 Philadelphians each year. It helps families close the gap between their income and their expenses, and develop financial assets by connecting them to advice about non-predatory, quality financial services, savings options, wealth building resources, credit building and public benefits. Individuals interested in helping working families should visit www.philly-freetaxes.org for more information and to register online or call 215-851-1759.

JEAN HUNT is the executive director of the Campaign for Working Families and director of the Working Families Division, Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition.