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Mayor Coleman Encourages Working Families to Seek Free Tax Assistance

Claim It! program helps people claim federal, state credits averaging \$2,200

(Saint Paul) – As the individual income tax filing season starts, Mayor Chris Coleman urged families and individuals with lower incomes to take advantage of both the federal and state tax credits that can supplement their incomes as well as the free tax preparation services that can help them claim those credits.

“It is critically important that families know they can claim the Earned Income Tax Credit and Minnesota Working Family Credit when filing their tax returns. These credits are designed for people who can use them – working families and individuals. When families do well, our community does well,” he said.

At the kick-off Feb. 2 for Claim It!, a United Way partnership initiative that offers free tax help for families making less than \$40,000 and individuals making less than \$30,000, Coleman said the credits – the federal Earned Income Tax Credit and the Minnesota Working Families Credit – represent real money for bills and expenses. The most recent figures from the state show that Minnesota filers received, on average, \$2,200 in credits from the state and federal governments.

“For a family of four with a household income of less than \$40,000, credits worth up to \$4,000 significantly adds to the take-home pay for that family,” Coleman said. “These credits can help pay for food, clothes, utilities, or rent.”

Volunteer income tax assistance centers are located in the Saint Paul Public Libraries as well as other locations throughout the region, staffed by volunteers organized and trained through the help of AARP Tax Aide. The tax help is free for families and individuals with low incomes, seniors, and people with disabilities. The centers offer help in multiple languages.

Coleman said families should take advantage of these sites to ensure the money that they can claim goes to them and not unscrupulous tax preparers who may charge up to 200% in interest for services and rapid refunds.

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“Families should use the Claim It! tax preparation services both for the free tax expertise and to keep the money they can claim, rather than letting predatory tax preparation services take that money through absurd fees and charges,” Coleman said.

Families and individuals who qualify and need tax preparation assistance can find a list of locations and hours on the Saint Paul Public Library Web site at www.sppl.org and clicking on “Tax Help at the Library” on the left-hand side of the home page. The state also has a list of community sites for people on its Web site at www.taxes.state.mn.us. Search for “Free Tax Assistance” in the search box.

Among the items that “Claim It!” attendees need to bring: Photo identification, income statements or W2s and a Social Security card or Individual Identification Number. For more information on what to bring, to make an appointment, or parking, call United Way 2-1-1. Simply dial 2-1-1 or from a cell phone dial 651-291-0211.

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