



# News Release

*Lifeline, Inc.*

PO Box 496, Painesville, OH 44077

(440) 354-2148

carried@lclifeline.org

## **Lifeline Concludes Tax Season, Prepares over \$340,000 in Returns for Lake County Residents May 21, 2019**

**PAINESVILLE, Ohio**— Lifeline, Inc. has concluded its 2019 tax season with one of its best results ever, according to the agency's administration.

Final statistics for the VITA Program for the 2019 tax season show that 221 residents had their taxes prepared at a Lifeline VITA tax clinic and that 79 of them received the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), compared to 235 total residents in 2018. Total returns generated at Lifeline's VITA clinics were \$341,624, over \$40,000 more than the 2018 tax season.

"We're really excited about the number of people that we served with free tax preparation services this season—while we fell a dozen or so short of last year, we had many more of our participants qualify for the EITC and the amount of tax returns was actually much higher. We're really pleased to bring that kind of revenue back into the Lake County community," Dotson said. "We have to thank our partners at the United Way of Lake County. They provide funding for our VITA Program so that we can really take it to the next level and assist additional residents at multiple sites."

The EITC is a federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working families and individuals. Congress originally approved it in 1975. Eligibility factors include how much you earned in 2018 and how many children you have. Even single adults and couples without children can qualify for the credit, although families with children receive larger credits

Lifeline Program Coordinator, Heather DeMetro agreed that the program was a huge success this year thanks to the volunteers.

"This year's tax season was a huge success! We had 13 volunteers this year, which was a major contributor to our success. They devote their spare time to help Lake County residents and truly enjoy being a part of this program. I'm so grateful," said DeMetro.

Dotson says that it's also the partnerships and collaborative efforts amongst providers in Lake County that have really boosted the results of the program.

"This year we were able to expand on our partnership with the Perry Senior Center to more easily serve those in eastern Lake County, and launched new partnerships with Lakeland Community College and with the Willoughby Public Library in downtown Willoughby to be more accessible to those in western Lake County, both of which were very helpful," said Dotson. "We also have a long-standing collaboration with Lake Erie College's accounting professor, Julie Ziemak, who provides valuable guidance and training to our volunteers—we couldn't do this without her contribution."

Lifeline, Inc. uses volunteers trained and certified by the IRS through its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. VITA volunteers provide free income tax assistance to low-income, elderly and disabled people. Throughout the 2019 tax season, volunteers donated 589 hours to Lifeline's VITA Program—the most ever accumulated in one tax season.

Volunteers for the 2019 tax season included John Decker, Matt Fekete, Sabra Rodriguez, Sue Kunsman, Cher Kelley, Patricia Kelley, Rita McMahon, Brent Hanf, Dennis Jondle, Sara Aparicio, Linda Brentar and Harihur D'Silva.

Lifeline, Inc. has hosted VITA Tax clinics since 2010 and in that time, has prepared tax filings for 1,414 residents. Over these 10 years, volunteers have given 3,500 hours and \$1,809,051 in returns has been generated for Lake County residents.

"This year was also significant for our VITA Program because it was the first year we surpassed 500 volunteer hours served and we're closing in on \$2 million in returns generated," said Dotson. "For a program that is completely volunteer-driven, that is an amazing amount of money brought back into our community."

Lifeline, Inc. will host VITA tax clinics beginning again in January 2020. While specific clinic details will not be available until December 2019, Lifeline is already looking for volunteers who are interested in preparing taxes next season. Anyone interested can contact DeMetro at (440) 354-2148.

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a community action agency by the Ohio Development Services Agency, ODSA. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake County's low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline's current programming includes services in the healthcare, housing & energy assistance, information & referral services and consumer education & job training areas. Our motto is 'helping people, changing lives.' Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODSA, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Lake Health and through private donors.