



News Release

Lifeline, Inc.

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FREE Tax Preparation Help Available Through Lifeline, Inc.

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PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Did you know that you may not have to spend money to get your own money back? For the 12th consecutive year, free tax preparation help is available to low-income families and individuals in Lake County and newly available this year in Geauga County. Lifeline wants to help families and individuals meet their filing obligations, find credits they may not know about and protect them from unnecessary costs.

“Many people struggle with preparing taxes,” said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director. “Low-income people really cannot afford expensive advice to get the refund they should. We want everyone to know there is an alternative.”

In particular, Dotson believes Lifeline can help many families and individuals who may not realize they qualify for the Earned Income Credit (EIC). The EIC 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 2020 and how many children you have.

“A lot of families are at a different place financially than they were a year ago,” Dotson said. “If they earned less in 2020 than they did in 2019, they might qualify for the credit but not be thinking about it.”

Even single adults and couples without children can qualify for the credit, although families with children receive larger credits. Earned Income and adjusted gross income (AGI) must each be less than:

- \$50,954 (\$56,844 married filing jointly) with three or more qualifying children;
- \$47,440 (\$53,330 married filing jointly) with two qualifying children;
- \$41,756 (\$47,646 married filing jointly) with one qualifying child; or
- \$15,820 (\$21,710 married filing jointly) with no qualifying children.

The maximum tax credit for 2020 is:

- \$6,660 with three or more qualifying children
- \$5,920 with two qualifying children
- \$3,584 with one qualifying child
- \$ 538 with no qualifying children

Also, for the 2020 tax year, the additional child tax credit remained at up to \$1400 per qualifying child.

“Millions of EIC dollars go unclaimed every year,” Dotson said. “We don’t want that to happen in our community. The low-income people of Lake & Geauga Counties can count on Lifeline, Inc. for free tax help.”

Lifeline 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. This year Lifeline VITA volunteers have added military certifications to their knowledge base and will be able to assist in preparing tax returns for active and veteran military members.

“Filing for the 2021 Tax Season will begin on February 12 and we will begin preparing taxes on February 1,” said Tiffany Menosky, Lifeline Program Coordinator. “Our volunteers have put in many hours in the last two months to prepare and certify as IRS trained volunteers. All of our volunteers are certified for advanced returns this year, ensuring that we are able to help more people at our clinics.”

Lifeline’s tax clinics have proved highly successful over the last 11 years. Through the tax clinics, Lifeline volunteers have prepared tax filings for over 1,500 residents, totaling \$1,995,268 in returns and our clients have kept every penny of those returns. Our volunteers have logged over 4,200 hours in training and actual tax filing preparation.

Free tax preparation is available to residents who meet Lifeline’s federal income guidelines. Clinics are available on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, by appointment only, through April 15. Clinics are held at Lifeline’s Painesville office at One Victoria Place Suite 265 A, at the Perry Senior Center in Perry, at the Wickliffe Family Resource Center and at Lifeline’s Geauga Office at 12375 Kinsman Road Building H in Newbury. Appointments can be scheduled by calling Lifeline’s Lake County 2-1-1 at 2-1-1 or 639-4420.

All tax clinics will be held in person by appointment only. All appointments will be held in a safe and socially distant manner meeting all CDC guidelines. Masks will be required for entry into Lifeline’s office in accordance with state of Ohio mandates.

Lifeline’s VITA tax clinics are supported by the United Way of Lake County and through the federal Community Services Block Grant. For more information, please contact Menosky at 440-354-2148, extension 231 or at vita@lclifeline.org For more information on Lifeline, visit us online at www.lclifeline.org. You can also follow us on Facebook to stay posted on agency programs and events.

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. Lifeline received interim designation as Geauga County’s community action agency in 2020.

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, guardianship, 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.