



News Release

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Lifeline Concludes Tax Season, Prepares Over \$275,000 in Returns for Lake & Geauga County Residents

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PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Lifeline, Inc. has concluded its 2021 tax season with its best results ever, according to the agency's administration. Final statistics for the VITA Program for the 2021 tax season show that 265 residents had their taxes prepared at a Lifeline VITA tax clinic and that 52 of them received the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), compared to 129 total residents in 2020. Total returns generated at Lifeline's VITA clinics were \$277,089, over \$90,000 more than the 2020 tax season.

"We're really excited about the number of people that we served with free tax preparation services this season—the most we've ever assisted in a single season and at a time when we know so many families have struggled financially due to COVID-19," said Carrie Dotson, Lifeline executive director. "We anticipated a high demand because so many of the AARP sites were either closed or limited by social distancing due to COVID-19 and we knew we would need to fill the gap. We have to thank our partners at the United Way of Lake County. They provided emergency funding for our VITA Program so that we could meet that increased demand this season."

"I am thrilled the United Way of Lake County was able support Lifeline's vital VITA Program with COVID relief funding. We know how important this service is for so many people in our community, especially our residents of modest income," said United Way of Lake County CEO Jennifer McCarty. "Free tax preparation by trained volunteers alleviates stress for so many people, especially given the added stressors associated with the recent global pandemic. We also congratulate Lifeline for assisting the most tax filers they have ever helped in a single season, which resulted in more than \$270,000 coming back into Lake County's economy."

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 2020 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, 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 2021 tax season, volunteers donated 463 hours to Lifeline's VITA Program. Volunteers for the 2021 tax season included John Decker, Hari Disilva, Brent Hanf, Dennis Jondle, Tim Joyner, Bob Kenyon, Sue Kunsman and Rita McMahon.

Lifeline program coordinator, Tiffany Menosky agreed that the program was a huge success this year thanks to the volunteers and our partners.

"I am very pleased with our outcomes for the VITA 2021 tax season because we were able to help a good number of Lake and Geauga County residents file their tax returns. It is always rewarding to help taxpayers take advantage of several different tax credits, such as, the Earned Income Credit, the Child Tax and Additional Child Tax Credits and the Recovery Rebate Credit and to get these funds into local households and ultimately our communities," said Menosky. "The season was not without its challenges as we experienced a late start, saw tax law change in the middle of the season and an extension to the end of season. I could not have accomplished any of this without the dedication and commitment of our VITA volunteer group. They were amazing this year and were willing to meet our clients face-to-face in a very challenging time. I cannot thank our volunteers enough for their support and enthusiasm for the VITA program."

Menosky was also quick to thank our partners, as well.

"Thank you to everyone who devotes time and space, including our partner sites, the Perry Senior Center and the Wickliffe Family Resource Center. I also appreciate the partnership of the IRS and the backing of all those involved in operating the tax clinics," said Menosky.

Lifeline, Inc. has hosted VITA Tax clinics since 2010 and in that time, has prepared tax filings for 1,808 residents. Over these 12 years, volunteers have given 4,715 hours and \$2,272,357 in returns has been generated for Lake and Geauga County residents.

"Besides being able to provide this assistance to families and individuals struggling financially due to COVID-19, this year was also a significant one for our VITA Program because it was the year we surpassed \$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 2022. While specific clinic details will not be available until December 2021, Lifeline is already looking for volunteers who are interested in preparing taxes next season. Anyone interested can contact Lifeline at (440) 354-2148.

Lifeline's VITA tax clinics were supported by the United Way of Lake County and through the federal Community Services Block Grant. 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 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, UWLC and through private donors.