



News Release

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Lifeline Concludes Tax Season, Prepares Over \$370,000 in Returns for Lake & Geauga County Residents

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PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Lifeline, Inc. has concluded its 2022 tax season with its best results ever, according to the agency's administration. Final statistics for the VITA Program for the 2022 tax season show that 287 residents had their taxes prepared at a Lifeline VITA tax clinic and that 87 of them received the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), compared to 52 total residents in 2021. Total returns generated at Lifeline's VITA clinics were \$372,755, nearly \$100,000 more than the 2021 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."

"We are proud to partner with Lifeline in support of a program that helps so many with low to modest income. Not only did the VITA tax program help those in need of free tax services, the financial impact this has had on our community is impressive. The tax returns generated nearly \$373,000, which are funds brought back into our community's economy. We applaud Lifeline for the vital work they do to uplift so many right here in Lake County," said Jean Sency, Vice President Community Relations, United Way of Lake County.

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 2021 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 2022 tax season, volunteers donated 293 hours to Lifeline's VITA Program. Volunteers for the 2022 tax season included John Decker, Hope Harris, Lauren Hubbard, Dennis Jondle, Tim Joyner, Robert Kenyon, Sue Kunsman, Rita McMahon and Daryl Stewart.

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

"We had such a great tax season. With the amount of volunteer hours put in we were able to help so many residents, and we are excited to make that number grow next year," said Graves.

Dotson was also thanked Lifeline's partners, as well.

"We truly appreciate everyone who devotes time and space, including our partner sites, the Perry Senior Center and the Wickliffe Family Resource Center—they really allow us to reach every corner of Lake and Geauga Counties. We also appreciate the partnership of the IRS and the backing of all those involved in operating the tax clinics," said Dotson.

Lifeline, Inc. has hosted VITA Tax clinics since 2010 and in that time, has prepared tax filings for 2,095 residents. Over these 13 years, volunteers have given 5,008 hours and \$2,645,112 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 2,000 in returns filed and 5,000 volunteer hours given," said Dotson. "For a program that is completely volunteer-driven, that is an amazing amount of people to have helped."

Lifeline, Inc. will host VITA tax clinics beginning again in January 2023. 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 Department of Development, ODOD. 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 ODOD, 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.