

Local News



Mary Dupont, Executive Director of Nehemiah Gateway Community Development Corporation, and Jack Markell, state treasurer, announce that the EITC program generated more than \$13 million in returns.

EITC refunds reach all-time high in Georgetown area

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State treasurer Jack Markell last week announced that the fifth annual Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign brought in record refunds in the Georgetown area and Delaware as a whole.

The campaign generated more than \$1.4 million in refunds for the almost 930 residents in the Georgetown area that filed their 2005 tax returns through the statewide campaign. That included more than \$630,000 in EITC refunds, up from about \$500,000 last year.

Additionally, the campaign's mobile unit, which made stops in Lewes, Selbyville and Laurel, helped to file another 423 returns totaling about \$240,000 in EITC refunds, Markell's executive assistant Corey Marshall-Steele said Monday.

Statewide, the campaign generated about \$13 million for 10,500 working Delawareans, many of whom qualified for the EITC. According to Marshall-Steele, the program is not only for

the EITC refunds, but to help low-income workers understand any additional tax credits they may be eligible for.

The EITC is available to families with incomes below \$40,000 and single workers making less than \$12,000. The refundable credit can total as much as \$4,400 annually, depending on income and the number of children in the family.

The treasurer's office thinks the results speak for themselves.

"This federal tax credit is widely regarded as our nation's most effective program at lifting working families out of poverty," Markell said. "The net effect is if a worker makes \$7 per hour and claims the full credit, that it essentially increases their hourly wage to \$9.

"That increase can and does make a real difference in people's lives."

More than 300 volunteers, including 18 in the Georgetown area, participated at 23 locations across the state, putting in long hours to prepare the returns and provide information about other financial services. Unlike some scams that Marshall-Steele warned taxpayers to beware of, the campaign is completely free of charge.

"Our volunteer preparers were consistently amazing. They were there each week working hard to make sure that those coming to have their taxes prepared received every benefit they were eligible for," said Mary Dupont, Executive Director of the Nehemiah Gateway Community Development Corporation, which coordinates the EITC campaign.

"We couldn't have done it without the dedication of our talented volunteers."

As high as the numbers were this year, those involved with the campaign hope to outdo themselves when next tax season rolls around.

In addition to the federal EITC refund, a similar state credit will also be available for 2006 tax returns.

"We are really committed to helping working families and that's why we believe so strongly in the EITC campaign," said Sen. Margaret Rose Henry (D-Wilmington), lead sponsor of the bill that called for the state's program.

The state EITC creates a credit equaling 20 percent of the federal credit, and officials project about 14,000 low-income Delawareans will no longer pay state income taxes and an additionally 14,000 will pay less in taxes.

Delaware is one of only a handful of states with its own EITC program.

To learn more about the EITC or to become a volunteer for next year's campaign, contact the Nehemiah Gateway Community Development Corporation at 302-655-0803.