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Tax Filing Assistance, Anyone?

With the stuttering state of the economy, for many people every cent saved counts. As tax season comes along, those who are unable or unwilling to file their own taxes would engage the services of professional tax preparers. But for a substantial group of others, they would choose instead to use the services of volunteer or free tax preparers. This service is known as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), and has been set up by the IRS for precisely the purpose of providing free voluntary help to taxpayers in submitting their tax returns.

However, not everyone may utilize these free services. Only those whose annual wages are below \$49,000 qualify for VITA. Besides VITA, another IRS program helping taxpayers, in particular the elderly is Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE). TCE collaborates with the AARP in providing this free service to the elderly at over 7,000 of its locations across the United States.

While it is still only the start of the tax season, the IRS is expecting many more people to file their returns early this year with the intention of getting back their refunds earlier as well. Even this little bit helps considering the state of the economy. The IRS operates on a first-come-first-served basis as far as issuing refunds go.

Taxpayers have started filing their tax returns electronically since last Friday when the IRS opened its doors to receive returns. Likewise, the VITA and TCE centers will be opening in the coming weeks, expecting to receive a huge influx of taxpaying Americans requiring help with their tax returns. Both these programs also accept electronic filing.

But should you approach either the VITA or TCE for assistance, be sure you have full documentation in order for them to help you. For example, to apply for the making work pay tax benefit, you need to have your W2 statement to show that you have worked. Merely having unemployment earnings statements does not qualify you for the Earned Income tax credits.

Other key important documents you should have with you when filing your taxes with the VITA or TCE would be your original Social Security cards and that of your dependents (if any), your driver's license and your bank particulars, especially if you would like to use a direct deposit. It increasingly appears that this year, the VITA and TCE will be kept extremely busy.

Darrin T. Mish is a veteran, nationally recognized tax attorney who has focused on providing IRS help to taxpayers for over a decade. He regularly travels the country training other attorneys, CPAs and enrolled agents on how to handle their toughest cases with the IRS. He is highly

ranked among the top attorneys in the country, with an AV rating from Martindale-Hubbell and a perfect 10 on Avvo.com. Martindale-Hubbell has also honored him with a listing in their Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers. He is a member of the American Society of IRS Problem Solvers and the Tax Freedom Institute. With clients on every continent but Antarctica, he has what it takes to solve your IRS problems no matter where you live in the world. If you would like more information about his practice and how he can help you, please call his office at (813) 229-7100 or toll free at 1-888-GET-MISH.