

March 15, 2013

To: CyberTax volunteers (all volunteers with a valid email address in VMIS)

From: Bonnie Speedy, National Director and Vice President, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide

Subject: CyberTax 2013-10: Happy March 18!

Keep up the good work, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers!

In our 46 years, volunteers like you have calmed nervous taxpayers, helped them successfully file, and witnessed their gratitude. If you're like me, you probably even have a few "regulars" and some special stories to share. Although I am the national staff Vice President for AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, I am also a volunteer on Saturdays preparing taxes for 14 years, now. I have a couple who comes in to our Saturday site every year and asks for me. This year, my first day in February, that couple came in, filled out the Intake and Interview form, and headed back to see me. We see each other every year and they almost always tell me that their tax situation hasn't changed. I had a gut feeling that something had changed this year, so I kept probing. As I went through the intake form and talked with the couple, I discovered that their son had moved back in with them. He wasn't working and we quickly realized that he should be included as a dependent. The couple was very pleased when their refund was WAY more than expected. She cried and hugged me and told me how much they needed the money.

Each of you, the nearly 36,000 volunteers in this program, probably have a similar story of appreciation. Some of you may not even know the positive ways that you've helped the taxpayers who have come to see you. That connection to the taxpayer and that service to the community is what keeps us all coming back year after year, despite the challenges. I know that's why I wake up at 6:15 AM and spend big chunks of Saturdays for 10 weeks in a row helping taxpayers.

Volunteers helping others continue to make this program a success. The Volunteer Tax Alerts and Quality Site Requirements are coming out this week reminding us again to use the resources available and to keep applying what you've learned in your training and throughout the first half of the season. One resource you can count on is your fellow volunteer. We help each other too and so I'd also like to share with you about my recent trip to Houston, Texas. I've never served as a Counselor anywhere but Maryland, but this multicultural opportunity and Texas's lack of state taxes were a good fit. Assistant National Director and Maryland Counselor Marcy Gouge and I were able to travel and join Client Facilitator/Translator/ERO Carlos Fernandez in an emerging multicultural site in Houston. It was a brand new three-day ad hoc site this year, but we hope that our presence can grow next year and beyond. The site is in a health center focused on low income Hispanic/Latinos many of whom we found out, are exclusively Spanish speaking and many seemingly a bit nervous first time filers. My Spanish hardly extends beyond a greeting and Marcy's isn't much better. We did learn "un momento" which we used frequently as we had Carlos running back and forth between us. He was in high demand! Although we kept Carlos very busy, he was wonderful and patient and we certainly couldn't have helped the taxpayers without him. I'm proud of our efforts to start a new site in an underserved and diverse area

for free tax assistance, just as I'm proud of the efforts that each of you make at your sites.

As we pass the midpoint of the season and so many Cybertaxes are related to process and details, I wanted to stop and thank you for all you do for taxpayers across the nation. Hoping your last month or so of helping taxpayers brings you lots of feel good moments like I did my first day and helping new taxpayers in Houston!