

# Helping People Build Stronger Lives



We all know that economic self-sufficiency and financial stability are key to the success of families, and ultimately the strength of our community. United Way focuses on promoting financial stability to help individuals and families have access to opportunities that can help them build savings and gain more financial assets for long-term stability.

With this in mind, United Way is pleased to be a part of the Berks \$ In Your Pocket Coalition, which is helping eligible households gain access to the tax credits and refunds they're due by filing their taxes for free. **In 2009, the Berks \$ In Your Pocket Coalition helped over 2,500 eligible Berks County residents file their income taxes for free, bringing in over \$1.6 million in refunds.**

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, United Way was pleased to present "Super Saturday" at the BCIU Education Centre to help eligible families prepare their tax returns. Trained volunteers were on hand to assist clients by preparing tax returns and helping identify federal tax credit eligibility for lower-income individuals, such as the earned income tax credit (EITC), which will help put money back into the pockets of those that need it most. The Super Saturday event also offered a Community Resource Fair and supervised children's activities.

"United Way is assisting local families and individuals get the most from their 2009 tax returns," said Pat Giles, senior vice president of community impact at United Way. "Every dollar received through the earned income tax credit helps families in our community make ends meet, grows our local economy and improves economic independence". EITC is the largest federal cash assistance program for low-income, working taxpayers and helps lift more families out of poverty than any other government program.

Kristin Waldrop is one of the more than 100 trained community volunteers assisting with the tax prep efforts and was happy to volunteer at the Super Saturday event. "This is a great service for individuals, families and the community. One of the clients I helped today was anticipating less than \$100 as their refund, however, after we completed the tax forms, he learned that he would receive an \$800 return. You can imagine how grateful he was to learn that information."

Susan Ebbert, a retiree residing in Reading and Super Saturday client, shared that she appreciated the volunteers and the service. "This event was very convenient, and it's really great for retirees like me that are on a limited income."

The Berks \$ In Your Pocket Coalition tax preparation services are offered for eligible households through April 15 at sites throughout Berks County. Sites have day, evening and some weekend hours and bilingual services are available at several locations. To learn more about the sites, please visit [www.uwberks.org](http://www.uwberks.org).

The Berks \$ In Your Pocket Coalition is a great example of community collaboration and volunteer engagement. We're proud to play a key role in this effort and pleased to work with the following partners: Berks Encore, Berks Community Action Program, Centro Hispano, Catholic Charities, Reading Public Library, Boyertown Multi-Service Center, Friend, Inc., West Lawn-Wyomissing Hills Library, Berks County Intermediate Unit and Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading and Berks County.



***Susan Ebbert, left, receives help from Amanda Reedy, a volunteer tax preparer, at Super Saturday.***



***Tax preparation efforts continue through April 15th at sites throughout Berks County.***

***Visit [www.uwberks.org](http://www.uwberks.org) for more information and to see a complete listing of the tax prep sites.***