

## Tax Services Brings \$65 Million for NYC's Working Poor

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by *David McCoy*

The tax season begins in earnest for most New Yorkers in late January, but here at the Food Bank it really begins in early October. You see, the Food Bank's **Free Income Tax Services** program utilizes close to 500 staff and volunteers — including approximately 250 **IRS-certified** volunteer tax preparers and translators fluent in more than five languages. From October all the way through January, when our tax sites open their doors, the Food Bank works hard to ensure that all the training and outreach necessary to provide top-notch tax services to New York City's working poor is complete.

When tax day finally arrives, the months of hard work is rewarded by the impact our tax services team knows we are making on our city. **This year, our Free Income Tax Services program helped complete more than 37,000 returns, providing over \$65 million in tax refunds and credits for low-income New Yorkers.** In addition to the benefit this brings directly to our tax service clients, it is also gratifying to know that bringing \$65 million back into New York City is a boon to the local economy during the difficult economic times we still find ourselves in.



A program that brings tens of thousands of low-income New Yorkers to our doors to address their finances also provides a unique opportunity for the Food Bank to address **food poverty** on many levels. In addition to tax services, the Food Bank helps to connect our client to available services including **food stamps** and low-cost health insurance options.

Helping our clients make long-term changes to their financial health, our staff also provides an introduction to **SaveUSA** — a New York City program that helps low-income New Yorkers open savings accounts — as well as a new pilot program from the **Intuit Financial Freedom Foundation** for low-income entrepreneurs, financial management and tax preparation.

While the tax season ends for most people on April 15, the Food Bank continues to provide services at our **Community Kitchen & Food Pantry** in Harlem — helping our clients respond to IRS disputes and continuing to file current and past year returns.

As our work certainly carries on, I have to extend a huge thank you to all of our supporters — particularly our army of volunteers, tax-season staff and partners. We simply could not have brought more than \$65 million to our low-income neighbors without your support.

*If you would like to join the effort to bring tax assistance to NYC next year, **email us** with your information and we will email you detailed information when the 2012 tax season gets closer!*