



Free Tax Preparation Helps Families Become Self-Sufficient

When you give to United Way, you are making a way better difference in the lives of families in our community. United Way funds programs focused on economic self-sufficiency, health and behavioral health. We are pleased to share highlights about one of the programs funded in part by United Way contributions: Baxter Community Center's Tax Preparation and Family Assistance Program, which is part of the Kent County Tax Credit Coalition.

The Kent County Tax Credit Coalition, housed at Heart of West Michigan United Way, provides free tax preparation services for low- and moderate-income people. In 2007, volunteers helped return more than \$6 million to working families in the form of tax credits and refunds.



"When people get large tax refunds and credits, they are often tempted to spend it right away on material items that demonstrate prosperity, like clothes and cars. We connect our clients who receive free tax preparation services with budgeting classes to help people choose how to budget their money, invest and buy wisely.

We believe in empowering people to the next level at Baxter. Basic needs are important, but we want to help them achieve more; if we don't learn these lessons, it will pass to the next generation."

Brian Jones, Community Outreach Coordinator, Baxter Community Center



"I love giving back to my community, so if I get a little extra, I do something for someone else. It's all a gift from God and I believe we need to share. My spirit of sharing came from my mother, who raised five of her own children plus three of her nieces and nephews. She was still able to do for others. I volunteer with God's Kitchen, Jubilee Jobs and Messiah Church.

The tax preparers are so helpful, patient and kind. They really care about us.

When I worked at Nelson Metals in Grandville, I always donated to United Way. It's one of the things I believed in and signed up for each year."

Bobbie Jordan, Kent County Tax Credit Coalition Client, Baxter Community Center





Resources for People Who Live Paycheck to Paycheck

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"Both my son and I use the tax preparation services for the first time this year. Some people don't file for years because they are scared of the rules and forms. Many people are eligible for tax credits and exemptions. The people helped by the program include working families, fixed-income seniors and others.

The volunteers are professionals who know tax law. The hours are convenient for working families. And the location is accessible for elderly people and people who may not have access to many services.

I am a single mom who goes to school and work. My car wasn't working at the time, but I was able to get to Baxter because it is on a bus line. I used my tax credits and refund to fix my car and pay bills.

I am so impressed that I became a volunteer, too."

Pamela Martin, Kent County Tax Credit Coalition Client, Baxter Community Center

"Volunteering to prepare taxes has become somewhat of a passion for me. I volunteer 45 or more hours a week during tax season.

I strongly recommend that people use the free services available. The fact that it is a free service does not compromise the accuracy of returns.

The people we help are so appreciative and thankful."

Gord Koetje, Kent County Tax Credit Coalition Volunteer, Baxter Community Center

"I took budgeting classes and learned about the services of the tax credit program. I appreciate the free tax preparation services. One year I paid \$2,000 for a rapid refund.

I live paycheck to paycheck, and with my tax credits and refunds, I was able to catch up with bills. The volunteers provide really good services."

Jacklynn Barrett, Kent County Tax Credit Coalition Client, Baxter Community Center

