

October 16, 2013

To: AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Volunteers

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

Subject: CyberTax 2013-16: Diversity Outreach and Diversity Site Bundles

This past tax season, I helped a woman file taxes for the first time. She was an immigrant from Mexico and she wanted to live up to her responsibility and file and pay her taxes. Her wages were over the poverty level, but not by much. I helped her with the ITIN process, worked through her 1099s, and readied her return for filing. When she left the site with the return (as you know ITIN returns can't be e-filed) I wasn't sure if she'd have second thoughts and change her mind. She was taking a risk in identifying herself and her immigration status formally, and the site and I had done all we could. Now it was up to her.

We helped this woman at an ad-hoc three day site that I've mentioned before in Houston, Texas. We set up the site to reach a multicultural community, not only because multicultural outreach is an AARP, AARP Foundation, and AARP Foundation Tax-Aide goal, but because we have an opportunity to help taxpayers like mine woman meet her tax obligation regardless of their immigration status with them paying money they couldn't likely afford (on that income certainly).

I can give you a few census bureau statistics that illustrate my point; that there are a disproportionate number of Black/African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, and Asians with low-income in the United States. And, I can show you the results of the customer satisfaction survey and compare those to the census to show you that there is still a great opportunity for us to serve more multicultural taxpayers. I don't think I need to.

I don't think this is really about statistics. I think this is about helping people and I know you're good at that. I see it year after year. You help millions, one at a time, with the professionalism and integrity that has become a hallmark of this program. So, I offer you this opportunity. Help even more of the people who need it. Is there a multicultural site or a community where you see an opportunity? Are you willing to start a site there, but...? Hopefully, that's where we come in and can provide the nudge you need.

Setting up a site isn't a snap, but we can offer some help. If you need a modest recruitment and promotion budget, a banner flag for front of the building, and/or a little more equipment, we are able to help no less than 50 sites. Attached you'll find an application for what we're calling the Diversity Site Bundles. It's our starter kit for setting up sites in diverse communities. No need at this point to check in with your formal leadership. We will work with them as we determine who gets bundles.

We want you to apply! If you're a Counselor (as most of you are) and you see an opportunity here, be bold. Go for it!

That woman from Mexico filing for the first time? She came back the next day with her friends. She'd filed and she'd talked others into coming to see us.

It feels good to help people. I think we can help more people and helping in more diverse community is our biggest opportunity!

I'll be thrilled if you uncover an opportunity and get a new site going.

Thanks for all you do.