



The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) coalition provides free tax preparation services and asset building resources to working families with moderate to low incomes.

### THE ISSUE

Forty percent of families in the Greater Atlanta area are classified as working poor, meaning their wages most likely do not cover basic needs, even though many work over 50 hours a week. Too many of these hard working families pay hundreds of dollars in tax preparation fees and fail to claim the important Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Moderate to low income families lack access to a certified and IRS trained tax preparer with special emphasis on ensuring important tax credits such as Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Education Credits are received by every eligible person, and many do not have access to important asset building information and tools.

### UNITED WAY'S ROLE

United Way recognized the need to ensure hard working families Earn, Keep and Save their income. Since 2012, we have led the VITA coalition in Greater Atlanta to provide free tax preparation services to families with moderate to low incomes. The Earn It Keep Save It campaign operates through a matching grant from the IRS. United Way offers free tax preparation at more than 30 VITA sites throughout Greater Atlanta for qualifying families. The VITA coalition is focused on offering quality tax preparation by IRS trained and certified volunteers. However, tax preparation is not a onetime transactional activity and this initiative aims to connect tax payers to other asset building resources, such as savings tools and financial education opportunities.

### THE RESULTS

Under the leadership of United Way over the past 3 years, the VITA program has prepared nearly 40,000 returns. The 2016 tax season concluded with 546 volunteers preparing 14,579 returns, which represents more than \$14 million in refunds returned to hard working families. The VITA coalition continues to grow each year by helping more families save on tax preparation fees and keep more of their hard earned money. Qualifying families can visit any one of 40 VITA sites and have their taxes prepared free by trained volunteers.