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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 9, 2020

Now Recruiting Volunteers for CSET's Free Tax Assistance Program (VITA)

Training Will Be Conducted Online For VITA Volunteers

[Tulare County, California] Community Services Employment Training (CSET) is now recruiting local volunteers to assist with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA). VITA provides tax preparation and electronic filing services at no-cost to Tulare County households with less than \$54,000 annual income. In 2020, 361 VITA preparers dedicated 7,901 hours to help file 3,883 tax returns for low- and moderate-income residents - returning more than \$5.9 million to Tulare and Kings Counties. For the 2021 VITA tax season, approximately 300 volunteers will be needed to serve as IRS certified tax preparers.

"CSET is looking forward to implementing VITA as a drop-off tax preparation service for the 2021 tax season – a service we piloted during COVID-19 that was very successful for our region, as many VITA sites nationwide had to close due to the pandemic," said VITA Director Albert Cendejas. "We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and remain in close contact with our VITA partners to ensure the safety of our customers, volunteers, and staff."

In compliance with COVID-19 measures, CSET's VITA program will conduct volunteer training online in preparation for the 2021 tax season. Tax preparation drop-off services will be offered to the public beginning February 2021. VITA volunteers will provide services to customers primarily over the phone to comply with social distancing measures.

"Being a VITA volunteer was a rewarding experience," shared VITA Volunteer Amaya. "Learning how to file taxes was a whole new career avenue for me and I appreciated gaining the experience in that industry. Customers would always express how grateful they were to receive our tax services - they had no idea they could file their taxes for free or be eligible for various tax credits that could earn them a cash back refund."

No prior experience is necessary to become a VITA volunteer. As a VITA volunteer, you will join a network of volunteers serving low-income communities nationwide through tax preparation services. With your assistance, local families in Tulare County will be informed about eligible cash-back tax credits, such as the state and federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Retired financial professionals, as well as adults and high school youth exploring careers in the finance industry, would serve as excellent volunteers. Bilingual volunteers are highly needed in this upcoming tax season as the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) has expanded eligibility to undocumented ITIN filers with children five and under.

For more information and to apply online, visit www.cset.org/vita. Interested volunteers may also contact the following CSET staff for more information:

- Albert Cendejas | (559) 741-4628 | Albert.Cendejas@cset.org
- Marcus Watkins | (559) 741-4698 | Marcus.Watkins@cset.org

Community Services Employment Training (CSET) inspires youth, families and communities to achieve self-reliance through innovative pathways and collaboration. Since 1976, CSET has been the Community Action Agency for Tulare County. We are a nonprofit agency established to fight America's War on Poverty.

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