

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CSET Recruiting Volunteers for Tax Season 2009

Community Services & Employment Training, Inc. (CSET) is gearing up for its fifth season of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program in Tulare County. Certified volunteer tax preparers will prepare and electronically file (e-file) federal and state income tax returns for households with incomes of \$50,000 or less for free.

The free program will begin serving taxpayers on Thursday, February 4 in Visalia, Tulare, Porterville, and Orosi. Last tax season, CSET's VITA Program provided assistance to 709 taxpayers and brought back more than \$800,000 to the local economy.

These services are made possible through financial support from the Tulare County Redevelopment Agency and State Department of Community Services & Development American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Initiative. El Futuro Credit Union and Family HealthCare Network are key partners, who contribute in-kind resources to support the program.

Perhaps the greatest single resource that has made this program possible is one volunteer with a big heart named Estela Cantu. Ms. Cantu is a long-time IRS employee at the Tulare Data Processing Center who ran a small tax site at the Manuel Hernandez Community Center in North Visalia for almost a decade before CSET got involved in the program. After coming home from working a swing shift on Friday night, Estela would pack up her van with computer equipment, set up her tax site, and help her friends and neighbors with their tax returns all day Saturday.

“When CSET found out about the work Estela was doing, we had to get involved by making all of our resources available to her to grow this grassroots program,” says Frank Ruiz, an Assistant Director at CSET, who has been involved in the program for the past 5 years.

By combining their resources, CSET has helped grow Ms. Cantu's program from helping less than 100 taxpayers in 2005 at one site to assisting 709 taxpayers at three sites in 2009. “Although we have added more sites throughout the county, hired part-time staff, and recruited and trained over 70 volunteers, Estela still runs this program and whips us into shape,” declares Ruiz.

“Estela is the heart and soul of this program,” says Ruiz. “People like her are my heroes and community champions.”

If you would like to work with Estela as a volunteer tax preparer, greeter, or translator with the VITA Program, CSET is currently recruiting volunteers to work at our sites in Visalia, Tulare, Porterville, and Orosi. Volunteer orientation and training will start Saturday, January 9. Please call Veronica Soria of CSET at (559) 741-4670 for more information about this program.

Community	CSET Office	Schedule	Appointments
Visalia	312 NW 3rd Ave. Visalia, CA 93291	Thursday: 5pm to 7pm (Appointments Only) Saturday: 10am to 3pm (Walk-ins & Appointments)	(559) 732-4194 Saturday appointments available only to unincorporated residents
Tulare	115 E. Tulare Ave. Tulare, CA 93274	Saturday: 10am to 3pm (Walk-ins & Appointments)	(559) 684-1987 Appointments available only to unincorporated residents
Orosi	12384 Avenue 416 Orosi, CA 93647	Saturday: 10am to 3pm (Walk-ins Only)	No Appointments Information Line: (559) 528-1095
Porterville	1061 W. Henderson Porterville, CA 93257	Friday: 5pm to 8pm (Appointments Only) Saturday: 9am to 4pm (Walk-ins & Appointments)	(559) 788-1440 Saturday appointments available only to unincorporated residents

About CSET

CSET, a nonprofit Community Action Agency, seeks to strengthen youth, families and communities through education, employment training, youth development, mentoring, leadership building, job creation, housing, environmental stewardship and other strategies that support self-reliant families and caring communities.